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

FREE JUNE 2020 FREE

Filling a need for food

Scott Langley photo

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Cover photo by Scott Langley: Volunteers at a food distribution event load boxes and bags into cars that formed a long line last month at the Columbia County Fairgrounds.

Filling a need for food

Pandemic tests limits of region's charitable networks

By EVAN LAWRENCE
Contributing writer

Scott Langley photo

Cars line up to receive an emergency food packages May 26 at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. Regional food banks and local charitable organizations have organized a series of similar events around the region as unemployment has spiked upward amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inside the local food pantry in Greenwich, N.Y., Donna was picking up groceries for her son and his family.

Her son was still working despite the coronavirus shutdowns, but her daughter-in-law was staying home with the children while school is suspended.

"I need to fill in with what they can't get in the store," Donna said. "I just thank God for the pantry here. It would be a hardship without it."

Another shopper, Denise, said she had come to the Comfort Food Community pantry for the past two weeks to stock up on vegetables and chicken.

"My husband's hours were cut back due to Covid," she explained.

She and her husband like to eat salads, but produce in the supermarket is expensive, she added.

The two women didn't want their last names published, but both said the food pantry fills a vital need.

"I'm not sure what we'd do" without it, Denise said. "Usually the Lord provides. I come when we need extra help."

Over the past two months, massive unemployment brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed the region's charitable food system to its limits.

From February to April, the jobless rate spiked from 3.7 percent to 14.5 in New York, from 2.8 percent to 15.1 percent in Massachusetts, and from 2.4 percent to 15.6 percent in Vermont.

Many of the lost jobs were in food service, accommodations and retail – all generally low-wage sectors. Hundreds of area health care workers also were laid off as hospitals postponed elective procedures.

"The job losses and recession are hitting people really hard," said Nicole Whalen, spokeswoman for the Vermont Foodbank. "Some people were struggling before, and now they're in a much deeper struggle. Others never needed help before, but they're struggling now."

A recent study by the University of Vermont estimates that food insecurity in the state has increased by 33 percent since the pandemic started. Requests for food assistance have shot up by 800 percent at some of the food bank's local partners, Whalen said.

"Our network is not set up to feed this percentage of the population," she said. "In normal times, we're already at capacity."

Restrictions to slow the spread of coronavirus, changes in supply chains, and the sheer size of the need has forced pantries and food banks to change the way they operate.

Many pantries are run by churches and staffed by a few volunteers, often elderly. A handful of those sites have closed because of concerns about the health of volunteers and the inability to maintain safe distances in small spaces, said Lillian Baulding, a spokeswoman for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. The regional food bank serves the Berkshires and three counties in the Pioneer Valley.

Other pantries have moved distributions outdoors. Before the pandemic, the best practice for many pantries was to allow guests to browse the shelves so they could choose the

food they wanted. Now most pantries have staff and volunteers pack food ahead of time and bring bags or boxes out to guests in their cars. Some relief organizations have dropped residency requirements or limits on how often people can get food.

Forced to change or curtail their operations, some community food pantries are actually serving fewer people amid the pandemic. But regional food banks in New York and Vermont have responded to the need by organizing mass-distribution events at central locations like county fairgrounds, where volunteers deliver packaged foods directly to car trunks of hundreds of people.

Rapidly changing plans

In New York's Washington County, Comfort Food Community shifted its operations in a "phased approach" as the pandemic worsened, said Devin Bulger, the group's executive director. The pantry, which serves people in the Greenwich Central School District, went from normal operations to enhanced sanitizing to "metered shopping" (allowing only a few guests in at a time) to parking lot distribution of pre-packed boxes.

Now that the area is in the first phase of reopening, "we went back to metered shopping," Bulger said. "We'll probably stick with it for the foreseeable future, at least through next month."

Demand "has been a little uneven," Bulger said. "There was an initial bump, but demand has evened off or is even a bit lower."

That could be because the staff-packed boxes contained more food than people would usually take on their own, and people haven't finished them yet, he said.

Others who might have come to the pantry instead went to a mass distribution held May 7 at the Washington County Fairgrounds. The event, organized by the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York and local partners, drew 397 vehicles and served nearly 1,800 people.

And, Bulger said, "unemployment benefits and some of the stimulus efforts are doing what they're supposed to do" – giving people money to buy groceries.

Comfort Food, which has regular weekly hours and is more active than many community food pantries, receives most of its non-perishable food from the regional food bank. That includes U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities, the stock of which has increased during the pandemic as the USDA buys up food that normally would go to restaurants and institutions.

Donations from supermarkets are "a little stressed," but "we can manage a pretty normal stock," Bulger said.

Community support

Like most pantries, the Comfort Food Community relies on fund-raisers and donations to help keep its doors open. It had to cancel its annual fund-raising campaign, Give Hunger the Boot, because people couldn't get together. Instead, the community did an online fund-raiser, Kick Covid, that brought in $25,000. Supporters created individual fund-raising pages through the food pantry's website to ask their friends for donations.

"It was a way people cooped up at home could lean in to that and support the cause," Bulger said.

The Comfort Food Community met its initial goal of $15,000 through an anonymous donor's dollar-for-dollar match, then went for the higher amount.

"The average donation was $127," Bulger said. "It was broad-based and grassroots."

The pantry received a $77,000 grant from Nourish New York, a $25 million state emergency fund to enable food pantries to buy and distribute New York agricultural products. The funds have to be disbursed within six months.

"We need a high-volume way to spend the money, and we want to keep it close to home," Bulger said. The hope is to partner with Greenwich Central School to feed students while school is out for the summer, he said.

Columbia Opportunities Inc., based in Hudson, provides a number of services for low-income residents of Columbia County. When the pandemic struck, the community action agency had to close some services, such as Head Start and tax filing assistance, but loosened its requirement for food aid to include "anyone in need," said Tina Sharpe, the group's executive director.

Columbia Opportunities is collaborating with other organizations to ensure that people who need food can get it – for example, by partnering with a volunteer group, Doorstep Deliveries, to deliver pantry food to people's homes.

"The demand at the food pantry is very low right now," Sharpe said. "It's a little perplexing."

It's helped that schools are continuing to provide breakfast and lunch to students, she said.

"Poverty and hunger have been present in the community for many years," Sharpe said. "The pandemic has only highlighted the economic disparities in our communities. Some people live with a concern about where their next meal will come from every day. Their needs won't be addressed by the programs we have today."

Sharp increase in demand

For Mark Quant, executive director of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, March 16 was the day everything changed.

"We've had a 50 to 60 percent increase" in orders from member pantries, he said.

The regional food bank, based in Latham, serves 23 counties in eastern New York, from Putnam County to the Canadian border. The pandemic's impact has varied across the area, he said, depending on local needs and how well communities are responding.

"Some are doing a good job of meeting the need," he said.

The regional food bank has added staff and a warehouse to handle the demand.

"Fortunately, we entered this time with a very strong inventory," Quant said. Federal supplies are coming through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, and the bank has been able to buy New York food products through Nourish New York, a new state program to redirect surplus agricultural products from New York farmers.

"It's really good food coming in," Quant said.

The bank has organized special food distributions around its service area, including the one at the Washington County Fairgrounds and another on May 26 at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. Between 300 and 750 vehicles have shown up at each event, with one topping 1,000, Quant said. Many people waited in line for hours.

Public schools in New York have been ordered to continue to provide school meals through the summer, Quant said. That will help make up for community summer programs that fed kids lunch and snacks and sometimes sent food home. Those programs, which depended on children congregating, have been suspended, he said.

"The most essential thing people need is food," Quant said. "The bank provides food every day and responds to disasters. Usually disasters are local. This is everywhere. Nobody saw this coming."

He predicted that demand will ease somewhat as the economy begins to recover.

"But it will take people a while to build back up what they've lost," Quant said. "As long as people need food, we'll be here doing the best we can."

Reaching out in Rutland

The Rutland Community Cupboard is a donation-based food shelf that, until recently, only served people living in the Rutland area.

"We're now serving anyone who needs food," said Rebekah Stephens, the group's executive director.

There are no quantity limits, but "we ask that you take only what you need," she said.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott shut down the state in late March as the pandemic spread.

"In the first week or so, there was panic," Sharpe said. "That's settled down. We've seen a ton of new faces – people out of work, kids out of school, definitely a lot more families. We're helping a minimum of 50 families a day."

At first the pantry closed its indoor store and had volunteers give out pre-packed bags of food. But the pantry had a garage full of shelving, and Sharpe and her husband moved the contents of the store to the garage, where guests could pick out their own food and still keep safe distances.

"That's been working really well," Sharpe said. "It reduces clients' stress and gives them some sense of control."

The Vermont Foodbank "has made a commitment to keep the food supply steady," Sharpe said.

A grant from the Vermont Foodbank enabled the pantry to buy organic produce from Radical Roots Farm in Rutland.

"To be able to give that to people is just awesome," Sharpe said.

Local processor Thomas Dairy is supplying fresh dairy products.

"They've been so good to us," Sharpe said.

The Vermont National Guard organized a mass distribution of food recently at the local airport and donated leftover MREs (meals ready to eat).

"We have them in stock," Sharpe said. "People like them. Some have lasagna in them."

Depending on guidance from state and federal authorities, Sharpe said she plans to reopen the pantry's indoor store on June 15. About half of the volunteers will return, "with all kinds of safety measures.

"We'll serve as quickly, efficiently and safely as possible," she said.

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Scrambling to adjust

Whalen, of the Vermont Foodbank, said the charitable food system is facing a "perfect storm" brought on by the combination of greatly increased need, limits on availability of volunteers, and more labor-intensive food distribution methods such as pre-packed boxes.

"We gave out 83 percent more food last month with the same infrastructure," she said. "The size of our warehouse and the number of our trucks hasn't changed."

The Vermont Foodbank and several state public and private organizations collaborated to join the federal Farm to Families Program, which provides boxes of state-grown food to families in need.

"We're giving out 1,000 boxes of fresh food daily through the end of June," Whalen said. "It's high quality food, locally produced."

At the same time that some area families are struggling to obtain food, some dairy farmers in the region have been dumping milk they can't sell. Dairy processors are struggling to adjust to rapid shifts in demand brought on by coronavirus-related school and restaurant closings.

So the Vermont Community Foundation donated $60,000 to the food bank to buy Vermont milk and pay local processors to turn it into bottled milk and yogurt.

The Vermont Foodbank, the state Emergency Operations Center and the Vermont National Guard have organized several mass distributions of food around the state. One, at the state airport in Berlin, drew an estimated 1,900 cars in a line that stretched for five miles. Some people had to be turned away when the food ran out.

"What we're facing now is unprecedented," Whalen said. "The level of need is completely unfathomable. Government has to do a better job of stepping up and making sure people in our communities are fed."

The Vermont Foodbank and other anti-hunger groups are advocating for more state funding and improvements to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,

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A MONTH IN THE HILLS

Region moves to reopen as virus spread slows

Two months after the coronavirus thrust the region's economy into a deep freeze, public health officials began to give the OK in May for the first steps toward reopening.

With new cases of Covid-19 on the decline across Vermont, Massachusetts and New York, the governors of the three states began to roll back restrictions that had abruptly shuttered schools, nonessential businesses and government offices beginning in March. The details varied by state, but businesses that were allowed to reopen faced new operating restrictions, while health officials continued to urge people to wear face masks, wash hands frequently and maintain physical distance of 6 feet or more from others.

By the beginning of June, hair salons and houses of worship began to reopen across the region, restaurants were preparing to offer outdoor table service in addition to takeout, and many retail stores and offices were able to resume operations with reduced occupancy limits. But gyms, bars, movie theaters (except drive-ins), amusement parks, performance halls and sports arenas remained shuttered.

Over the course of May, it became clear how many aspects of life would not be returning to normal this summer. With large-scale gatherings expected to remain banned for weeks or even months to come, many of the region's theater and music festivals called off their summer seasons entirely, and organizers canceled events ranging from agricultural fairs to Fourth of July parades.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra canceled its Tanglewood Music Festival, the crown jewel of the Berkshires' summer season, for the first time since World War II, replacing it with a series of online offerings. The Saratoga Performing Arts Center called off the summer residencies of the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra. The thoroughbreds will still run at the Saratoga Race Course, but without live spectators.

Other event cancellations announced over the past month include the Saratoga County Fair, the Vermont State Fair, and FreshGrass, the bluegrass and roots music festival normally held every September at Mass MoCA.

The Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, which normally attracts 30,000 visitors a year to its campus in Stockbridge, announced May 21 that it would shut down until 2021, laying off 450 employees. Kripalu had already been closed to visitors since mid-March but was able to keep paying its staff with funds from the federal Paycheck Protection Program; those funds were expected to run out in June.

Couples planning large weddings either scaled down their guest lists or postponed until 2021. In Vermont, the head of the Vermont Association of Wedding Professionals told the *Rutland Herald* that the state's wedding industry expected to earn no more than 20 percent of its normal revenue this year.

And even when restaurants are allowed to resume indoor dining service in the weeks ahead, they are expected to be limited to about half their normal seating capacity. As a result, local communities from Rutland to Lenox, Mass., have been debating proposals to allow

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more use of sidewalk and street space for outdoor dining tables.

Pandemic's toll

By the beginning of June, state figures showed more than 2,500 people had been sickened by Covid-19 across the Berkshires, southwestern Vermont and the New York counties of Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Warren and Washington. Most of those people had recovered, but at least 166 died from the disease since it made its first appearance locally in early March. That translates to a mortality rate of more than 6 percent among the region's documented cases.

Nursing homes have continued to suffer the worst of the pandemic and accounted for 93 of the region's coronavirus deaths as of June 1. The Williamstown Commons facility in Massachusetts alone saw 24 of these fatalities, while another 38 people had died in a cluster of Covid-19 outbreaks at three nursing homes in the Glens Falls area.

Although the elderly are most vulnerable to the disease, health officials warn that Covid-19 can pose serious risks to younger people as well, especially those with pre-existing health issues including such common conditions as obesity and hypertension. Statewide data from New York show about two-thirds of the deaths so far have occurred among people over 70, but another 30 percent were among people between the ages of 50 and 70.

State and local health officials have worked in recent weeks to expand testing capacity, which was extremely limited for the first two months of the pandemic, and to train a network of contact tracers whose task will be to quickly track and contain new clusters of disease that might arise as more economic activity resumes.

In New York, the seven-day average of new Covid-19 cases per day dropped from more than 10,000 in April to a little more than 1,000 as of June 1. Massachusetts, which had been recording more than 2,000 new cases per day in late April, was down to a few hundred per day, and Vermont, which peaked at about 40 cases per day in early April was down to fewer than five per day.

In an effort to curb outbreaks at nursing homes, New York in mid-May began requiring twice-a-week coronavirus testing for all employees at long-term care facilities. Nursing homes have been closed to visitors since early March, so health officials say the biggest risk for introducing the coronavirus into the facilities comes from employees who might come into contact with it in the wider community.

But nursing home operators objected to the cost of the testing requirement, which they estimated at more than $40 million a week, and questioned whether state and private labs had the capacity to process the additional 300,000 tests a week that would be required to comply with the new mandate.

At the same time, Gov. Andrew Cuomo adjusted a controversial directive he had issued in late March telling nursing homes they could not deny admission to patients who were recovering from Covid-19. Critics said those recovering patients might pose a risk of infection at nursing homes where there weren't already coronavirus outbreaks.

Under a new executive order announced in mid-May, the governor said hospitals would be barred from discharging a patient into a nursing home unless the patient first tests negative for Covid-19. But that change drew pushback from hospitals: The *Times Union* of Albany quoted officials of Albany Medical Center warning that the new requirement would strain hospitals' finances and capacity by forcing them to continue housing patients who no longer require acute medical care.

In other news from around the region in May:

Local communities join wave of protests

The death of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer in late May sparked a rolling series of demonstrations in local communities that continued for more than a week.

From Rutland to Hudson, N.Y., and from Pittsfield and North Adams to Bennington, Cambridge, N.Y., and Glens Falls, crowds that ranged from dozens to hundreds turned out to demand justice for Floyd, protest police brutality and show support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Floyd, an unarmed black man who was 46, died on the evening of Memorial Day in the

custody of police who were responding to a complaint he'd passed a counterfeit $20 bill at a Minneapolis store. Cellphone video taken by a bystander shows four officers holding him face down on a city street, with one kneeling on his neck for more than eight minutes as he pleads that he can't breathe and then goes limp.

The video set off a wave of street protests and civil unrest that continued for days across the nation. But in contrast to the tense confrontations between police and protesters in major cities that in some cases were marred by violence, arson and looting, the local protests over Floyd's death remained entirely peaceful.

In Hudson, the *Register-Star* reported that a demonstration organized by Mayor Kamal Johnson attracted about 300 people and included speeches by Johnson and the city's police commissioner.

Johnson, who is the city's first African American mayor, also invited members of the local youth organization Kite's Nest to the microphone. One of them, Dezjuan Smith, summed up the urgency of the protests.

"After being left speechless by the horrific video that we all saw, I think now we can't simply speak. We need to do," he said. "The best way to make an impact is to show people that we matter, that everybody matters. And I feel like it is not just a race thing, it is a class thing. It is an oppression thing."

Elected officials from around the region also spoke out about Floyd's death and the protests that followed, though the tone of their comments varied according to their political persuasions.

In an op-ed column in *The Washington Post*, U.S. Rep. Antonio Delgado, D-Rhinebeck, described how he launched his political career two years ago, winning a seat representing the House district that includes Columbia and Rensselaer counties.

"I'm a black man representing a district that is nearly 90 percent white and in one of the most rural parts of the country," Delgado wrote. "I'm the first person of color to ever represent upstate New York in Congress. … My experience is proof that voting can bring about change that once might have seemed out of reach — in fact, it's crucial to changing the laws and policies that have caused so much agony."

He urged protestors to stay engaged and to use their vote if they want to achieve lasting change.

"Protesting alone is not enough," Delgado continued. "If you want to hold police officers accountable through the criminal justice system, then you need to vote and elect prosecutors who will do so. If you want to change training practices and use-of-force policies to prevent unjust outcomes, then you need to vote for local officials who will make these changes. … And if you want national leaders with the moral courage to lead with compassion and love rather than with cowardly fear-mongering designed to fan the flames of hate and division, then you must vote for those leaders."

– Compiled by Fred Daley

The Battenkill Valley CAMBRIDGE, NY

EDITORIAL

Cases highlight need for policing reforms

Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Freddie Gray, and so many more: The past decade seems a blur of names of unarmed black men, and occasionally women, dying at the hands of police. The cases, from cities all around the nation, spark outrage and protests, and then fade from the news until the next case explodes into view.

But the death last month of George Floyd, held face down by four officers on the Minneapolis pavement, seems unlikely to fade from memory so easily. The bystander's cellphone video of Floyd, his neck pressed under an officer's knee for more than eight minutes as he pleads that he can't breathe and then goes limp, is simply too chilling.

Most stunning is casual indifference of the officers as they keep pressing down on Floyd, ignoring his pleas and those of the witnesses recording them from the sidewalk. As May turns into June, our political leaders in Washington are bitterly divided about the massive protests that have followed Floyd's death. But no one is defending the the officers, because the video is just too damning.

Locally, people demanding justice for Floyd have staged at least a dozen peaceful protests in communities from the Berkshires to Glens Falls and from Rutland to Hudson, drawing crowds that ranged from dozens to hundreds. There haven't been any tense standoffs with police.

But if you think that's because local police agencies in our area are all in great shape and that a case like Floyd's could never happen here, think again. To be sure, there are police agencies in our region that stand out for their professionalism, but others are overdue for a top-to-bottom overhaul.

Consider the case of Troy, where a city police sergeant shot and killed Edson Thevinen, an unarmed 37-year-old black man, in an April 2016 traffic stop. Police claimed the officer acted in self-defense, firing eight times after Thevinen pinned him between two vehicles. The county district attorney, who later lost his re-election bid, promptly presented the case to a grand jury, which cleared the officer of criminal wrongdoing. But two eyewitnesses, who weren't invited to testify, insisted the officer wasn't in any danger, and investigators from the state attorney general's office concluded the evidence didn't support the officer's story.

Then there is the case of Saratoga Springs, where another black man, Darryl Mount Jr., wound up mortally injured while fleeing officers after confrontation in 2013. The police chief, now retired, told reporters the incident was the subject of an internal investigation. Five years later, under oath, he admitted there was no investigation.

Recall too the city police in Rutland, where in 2015 a former officer's lawsuit put the spotlight on a series of incidents of racism and racial profiling – and in the process produced sworn depositions revealing a much broader range of misconduct, including lying in court, drinking on the job and fabricating probable cause. Two officers were indentified in depositions by their colleagues as allowing women to avoid drug charges by becoming "confidential informants" – a status that allowed the officers to cultivate the women for sex.

The officers in that case left the Rutland force, and a new police chief committed to reducing racial bias in the department's practices. But as of early 2017, a statewide study of racial disparities in policing found that black drivers pulled over by Rutland police still were six times more likely than white drivers to be searched.

If the death of George Floyd leads to a national push for policing reforms, the changes could well yield direct local benefits.

Letters to the editor

Require masks, quarantine for visitors to Vermont

To the editor:

The biggest blunder of the Republican Gov. Phil Scott is his failure to use common sense and mandate that masks be worn by everyone in stores and in public here in Vermont.

By refusing to mandate this common-sense precaution, Scott has unleashed out-of-staters to come into Vermont without masks and spread the deadly coronavirus to us.

We live here, and most Vermonters use their brains and wear a mask in stores. New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey and other nearby states have been infected in huge numbers by the virus, and thousands of people have died from it. It is still out of control in these states.

When people come here to Vermont to escape the virus, they need to be quarantined and wear masks. This needs to be law and be enforced by police. Let's use common sense and not be afraid to do the right thing.

Thomas W. King
Shaftsbury, Vt.

Take health care back from big businesses

To the editor:

Opponents of Medicare for All like to scare people by warning about a "government takeover" of health care.

Let's get serious: American health care was taken over long ago by insurance companies and other commercial interests. We need to take health care back from them.

The commercial takeover has reduced American health care to a maddening money pit. Health insurance premiums are tied to the amount of money insurers will have to pay out to doctors and hospitals.

The fees doctors and hospitals charge include money to compensate for the enormous amounts of time they spend on paperwork and administration – 18.5 hours a week for internal medicine doctors, 13.2 hours for dermatologists, per a recent survey. Much of that time is spent dealing with the insurance companies.

Once doctors and hospitals submit their bills to the insurance companies, the insurer spends time evaluating, processing and rejecting or approving claims. All this administrative time also gets built into the insurance company premium.

Some premiums are paid by individuals, some by employers. Amounts paid by employers get factored into the cost of the products and services they sell. Amounts paid by individuals reduce how much money they have available to pay for goods and services.

If the employer is a unit of government, the money spent on premiums comes from taxes paid by everybody. The higher the premium, the higher the tax needed. This tax gets factored into the household budgets of taxpayers, further reducing the amount of money available to pay for goods and services.

Individuals also spend considerable amounts of unpaid time dealing with the medical bills they receive for amounts that are not covered by their insurance (assuming they have insurance). Is the amount billed accurate? Is the amount really not covered by the insurance? Exactly how do they go about finding out?

Both individuals and employers put in unpaid amounts of time figuring out whether they should keep or change their health insurer, keep or change the type of policy they have, and adjust features of the policy like deductibles and co-pays.

I haven't even mentioned price-gouging

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From Vermont, a White House hopeful hailed as a reformer

Maury Thompson

Name a Vermont politician who served for more than two decades in Congress and mounted two unsuccessful presidential bids.

If your first guess is Bernie Sanders, that would not be wrong. But there is more than one correct answer.

U.S. Sen. George F. Edmunds of Burlington was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1880 and 1884.

Like Sanders, Edmunds was considered to be outside the establishment of his party, even though he held leadership positions in the Senate.

"The bare thought that such a man as George F. Edmunds may be likely to enter the presidential campaign as the nominee of the Republicans makes the politicians shake in their shoes," a columnist for the *McCook Weekly Tribune* of Red Willow Creek, Neb., wrote on May 8, 1884.

Besides running for president, Edmunds, a lawyer who passed the bar exam at age 21, was known as author of the Edmunds Act of 1882, which prohibited polygamy in Utah. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law in the face of several challenges.

In 1890, Edmunds helped draft the Sherman Antitrust Act, which prohibited businesses from engaging in monopolistic practices or forming anticompetitive alliances with other companies.

Edmunds served in the Senate 25 years, from 1866 to 1891.

He chaired several prominent committees and for a time was the chamber's Republican leader. He was Senate president pro tempore when Chester Arthur became president after the assassination of James Garfield.

"As a parliamentarian he gained high repute. Any member who ignored the rules would promptly invoke the Vermonter's biting satire," *The Barre Daily Times* wrote in a tribute to Edmunds on Feb. 28, 1919, a day after the politician's death, at age 91, after a long illness.

It was Edmunds' two presidential campaigns that were most frequently mentioned in obituaries.

In 1880, Edmunds had modest support through the 29th ballot at the Chicago convention where Republican delegates ultimately gave the party's nomination, on the 36th ballot, to a compromise candidate, Rep. James Garfield of Ohio.

"For the first time in her history, Vermont, always in the advance guard of the Republican hosts, comes to the front in a national convention," the lawyer Frederick Billings proclaimed as he placed Edmunds in nomination at the 1880 convention. "Her Republicanism is not born of selfishness. It is bred in her bone. It runs in her blood."

Billings was a native of Windsor County who went west amid the California gold rush of 1848 but returned to Vermont in 1864. The lawyer and financier served as president of the Northern Pacific Railway from 1879-81.

"Long tried and never found wanting … is George F. Edmunds, and him Vermont nominates for the presidency," Billings said. "Welcome, gentlemen of the convention, this breeze from the Green Mountains. How quickly it will swell into a gale and how surely sweep the land."

Front-runners going into the convention were Sen. James G. Blaine of Maine, former President Ulysses S. Grant, and Treasury Secretary John Sherman.

The Silver State newspaper of Unionville, Nev., editorialized on June 5, 1880, that the Republican platform, adopted before the nomination, appeared to be crafted to benefit either Blaine or Grant.

Blaine, who had voted in favor of banning immigration of Chinese laborers, would have approved of an immigration plank that Edmunds would have found impossible to support, the editorial suggested.

Edmunds "is committed on that question, having spoken and voted against the Chinese restriction bill in the United States Senate, and he is too conscientious to be a demagogue," the newspaper wrote.

Grant, on the other hand, appeared to benefit from a plank calling for national harmony and political civility.

"This seems to have been intended for Grant, as Blaine never lets an opportunity to raise his bloody shirt pass, while Grant is called the candidate of reconciliation," the paper explained.

Although Edmunds failed to win a spot on the national GOP ticket, Vermont did have a presidential candidate on the 1880 general election ballot. John W. Phelps of Brattleboro received just over 1,000 votes nationally, including 75 votes in New York, on the Anti-Masonry Party line.

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Letters *continued from page 10*

drug companies, private equity firms buying up medical practices, the huge amount of medical debt that more and more people struggle under.

Let's take health care back from the commercial interests that are strangling it.

Lee Russ
Bennington, Vt.

Switch to LED lighting raises wide range of risks

To the editor:

Across New York, many communities have installed LEDs (light-emitting diodes) in streetlights and other outdoor light fixtures. This is an unusually bad moment in history to expose broad swaths of the population to immune system impairment, sleep disruption and the elevated prostate and breast cancer risk this technology imposes.

Medical research long ago identified even low-level light exposure during sleep as a factor in childhood leukemia rates. LED blue-spectrum light is powerfully endocrine disrupting, with cancer as a plausible result, and these new bulbs have up to five times the impact of the conventional bulbs they replace. LEDs typically emit a flickering pulse visible to those with certain conditions such as photosensitive epilepsy, and they can trigger seizures.

Artificial light at night is also detrimental to the environment, subjecting wildlife to profound interference in their hunting, hibernating and reproductive cycles. Essential insects, including pollinators, have already suffered devastating population losses because of light exposure. LEDs, with their extensive light trespass, reach a wider area and stand to undermine the local agricultural sector with pollinator depletion.

Springtime is also a particularly terrible time to damage the health of natural systems – like vernal pools and aquatic habitat – on which ecological stability depends. Excess artificial light is classified as a pollutant for a reason.

Finally, the bulbs themselves contain heavy metals, arsenic and numerous other dangerous substances, making their ultimate disposal an added concern.

If a municipality installs LED lighting and there are complaints from the community, a typical response is to lower the color temperature of the bulbs. This addresses limited aspects of the visual discomfort people experience. It does little to nothing about other damaging effects. It is a mere reduction of the harm the new bulbs introduce, not the harm's removal.

Cost and electricity use reduction can be worthy goals, but light pollution and the harm it causes have only increased since these new bulbs were introduced. Because they are cheaper to operate, more are appearing every year and are staying lit longer. The public is largely unaware of the scope of the risk to human communities or nature – and how completely the negatives cancel out the positives. The wisest course of action regarding artificial lighting is to use it only when and where it is strictly necessary.

The consequences of LED lighting are not being adequately shared and discussed with the public. The American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, The Epilepsy Society, the National Park Service, the National Geographic Society, the journal Nature, The Smithsonian Institution and many other professional organizations have published research about the harm to humans and the natural world. It's hard to imagine any community that was fully informed would choose cheaper lighting over the threat to their health and their environment.

Marie Ann Cherry
Cambridge, N.Y.

An antidote to chaos: Vote in November

To the editor:

Last week an emergency room doctor, worn down by the onslaught of coronavirus patients dying before they even made it out of the ambulance, committed suicide.

Last night, I learned a friend had lost his father and brother in the same week to Covid-19.

Today, I try to absorb the president's push to "open the country" in the wake of 10,000 new coronavirus deaths last week alone.

In 2015, Jeb Bush said of Donald Trump: "He's a chaos candidate. And he'd be a chaos president. He would not be the commander-in-chief we need to keep our country safe."

Summer Farmers Markets 2020

Standard coronavirus-era requirements: One shopper per family, mask and gloves, avoid touching product (let vendors serve you), follow directional signs. Many markets reserve opening hour for customers who have greater risk for exposure to Covid-19. Some sell only online or by advance orders; others offer pre-ordering and market shopping. Vermont requires pre-ordering capability. Check online before you go.

MASSACHUSETTS

Berkshire County

Roots Rising Virtual Farmers Market
• Order noon Monday through 7:30 p.m. Tuesday
• Delivery within county
• www.rootsrising.org/virtualfarmersmarket

Berkshire Area (Lanesborough)
• 8a-2p Wednesdays and Saturdays through Nov. 21
• Berkshire Mall lot, Route 8
Fb: Berkshire-Farmers-Market

Great Barrington
• 9a-1p Saturdays through Nov. 14
• Pre-order w/vendors requested at www.greatbarringtonfarmersmarket.org

Hancock
• 10a-3p Wednesdays, June 28-Oct. 11
• Appletree Hill Organic Farm, 3210 Hancock Road (Route 43)
Fb: Hancock-Farmers-Market

Lee
10a-2p Saturdays through Oct. 10
25 Park Place
www.leefarmersmarket.com

Lenox
2-6 p.m. Fridays, June 5 to Oct. 2
21 Housatonic St.
www.lenoxfarmersmarket.com

Monterey
4-6 p.m. Tuesdays till Aug. 25
Roadside Store & Cafe
275 Main Road (Route 23)

North Adams
• Virtually order only, 3 p.m. Mon. to 3 p.m. Wed.
• Orders delivered ($5 fee) or pick-up on Saturdays at A-oK Berkshire BBQ courtyard
northadamsfarmersmarket.square.site

Otis
9a-1p Saturdays, May-Oct.
2000 East Otis Road
Fb: otisfarmersmarket

Downtown Pittsfield
• Online only through July 4: www.rootsrising.org/virtualfarmersmarket
• Deliveries on Saturdays
In person, July 11-Oct. 10, 9a–1p at The Common Park, First Street

Sheffield
• 3-6p Fridays through Oct. 9
First Congregational Church lot, 125 Main St.
• Pre-order & pickup available w/each farmer at www.sheffieldfarmersmarket.org

West Stockbridge
• 3-6 p.m. Thursdays through Oct. 1 at The Foundry Green
• www.WestStockbridgeFarmersMarket.org

Williamstown
• Pre-order only, 10a Mondays through 7p Wednesdays at wfmessentials.org
• No-contact pickup, 11a-1p Saturdays at Williamstown Elementary School, back parking lot, 66 School St.

NEW YORK

Upper Hudson & Capital Region

• moxie-box.com
• online farm-to-doorstep food box service
• Enter zip code to determine availability

Columbia County

Copake–Hillsdale
• 9a–1p Saturdays through Oct. 31
• Roe Jan Park, 9140 Route 22
• www.copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com

Hudson
• 9a-1p Saturdays through Nov. 21
• 6th and Columbia streets
www.hudsonfarmersmarketny.com

(Hudson) Upstreet Farmers' Market
• 4-7 p.m. Wednesdays, June 3 through Oct. 28
• 7th Street Park, Warren Street, Hudson
• Facebook: upstreetmarket

Kinderhook
• 8:30a-12:30p Saturdays through October
• 1 Hudson St.
www.kinderhookfarmersmarket.com

New Lebanon
• 10a–2p Sundays, June through October
• 516 State Route 20
Fb: newlebanonfarmersmarket

Rensselaer County

Hoosick
• 3-6:30 p.m. Fridays, June 25 through Oct. 15
• 5342 State Route 7
www.hoosicklocalmarket.com

Troy Waterfront
• 8:30a-3p Saturdays, Russell Sage Campus, on-site and pre-order
• Also, online store for Sunday pickup at Carioto Produce Warehouse, 80 Cohoes Ave.

Saratoga County

Ballston Spa
3-6:30p Thursday; 9a-1p Sat.
June 13-Sept. 26
Wiswall Park

Clifton Park
2-5p Mondays
at Shenendehowa Methodist Church parking lot
971 Route 146

Saratoga Springs
• 3-6p Wednesdays & 9a-1p Saturdays
• Wilton Mall, Bon-Ton & Bow Tie parking lots
• pre-order, curbside options
saratogafarmersmarket.org

Spa City (Saratoga)
• 10a-2p Sundays year-round
• Lincoln Baths at Saratoga Spa State Park, 65 South Broadway, Saratoga Springs
spacityfarmersmarket.com

Warren County

Glens Falls
• 8a–noon Saturdays through Oct. 31
• South Street Pavilion
glensfallsfarmersmarket.com

Washington County

Cambridge Valley
• 10a–2p Sundays
Outdoors, May-October
• Cambridge Central School, Route 22
• Shop in person and/or preorder with/without curbside pickup
• Online order at www.cambridgevalleyfarmersmarket.com

Fort Edward
4-7p Thursdays, June 4–Sept. 24
Canal Street Marketplace
preorder on Facebook

Greenwich
• 3-6 p.m. Wednesdays at Gather, 103 Main St.
• shop in person; pre-orders through individual farms

Whitehall
• 1-4p Tuesdays, June through late October
• Skenesborough Canal Park

VERMONT

Bennington County

Arlington
• 4-7p Fridays; opens July 10
• Arlington Inn grounds, Routes 7A & 313 West
www.arlington-vermont.com/farmers-market

Bennington
• 10a-1p Saturdays through Oct. 31
• 150 Depot St.
• Pre-order, w/pickup every other week; pickup times by alphabet
• In-person shopping: June dates TBD
benningtonfarmersmarket.org

Dorset
10a-noon Sundays year-round
• Pre-orders available/advised; vendors rotate due to limited space
• H.N. Williams General Store, 2732 State Route 30
www.dorsetfarmersmarket.com

Manchester
• 3-6p Thursdays till Oct. 3
• Adams Park, Route 7A
www.ManchesterFarmers.org

Rutland County

Brandon
• 9a-2p Fridays from June 19
• Central Park, Route 7
Fb: BrandonVTFarmersMarket

Fair Haven
3-6p Thursdays
June opening TBD through Oct. 22
Fair Haven Park
vtfarmersmarket.org/markets/fair-haven-market/

North Rupert–Mettowee Valley
3-6p Fridays through October
Route 30
mettoweevalleyfarmersmarket.wordpress.com

Poultney/Lakes Region
• 9a-2p Thursdays through October
• Main Street, Poultney
Main St
vtfarmersmarket.org

Rutland
• 9a-2p Saturdays through Oct. 31
• Depot Park
vtfarmersmarket.org/markets/summer

If your market isn't listed, send updated info to calendar@hillcountryobserver.com

Even if Trump's base thought they wanted disruption, this chaos can't be what they had in mind.

Chaos is ignoring scientific models predicting death toll surges as states reopen, continually contradicting medical experts, blocking the top medical adviser from testifying to Congress and retaliating against a director of vaccine research for exposing the early warnings Trump failed to heed.

Chaos is treating blue states as enemies, spitefully challenging their rightful claim to federal resources and federal aid.

Chaos is hiding how billions of dollars allocated to pandemic relief is being spent.

Chaos is issuing safety guidelines but encouraging armed protests in defiance of those same guidelines, then insulting every victim and front-line worker by refusing to wear a mask, because it "sends the wrong message."

Chaos is a president taking all sides of every issue, crying "fake news" at every fact that doesn't flatter him, abusing the free press and exploiting crisis briefings to air personal grievances.

Chaos is expressing sympathy to an ailing dictator while failing to acknowledge the suffering of American families who have lost more than 100,000 loved ones to this disease.

Chaos is an unhinged, late-night tweet-spree of personal insults, lobbed against leaders of a conservative group whose ad exposes the president's failure to mitigate this disaster or lead us forward.

Chaos is a president determined to take health care away from 30 million newly unemployed and uninsured Americans in the middle of a pandemic.

This administration has failed to coordinate a national response to a deadly virus that doesn't recognize state boundaries but threatens the lives of all Americans – rural or urban, red or blue – as it cripples health systems already strained to the breaking point.

We have the antidote to this chaos: Vote out Trump and every self-serving, anti-science enabler in this Congress. Our survival depends on it.

Robin Vaughan Kolderie
Hoosick, N.Y.

Putting worms to work

Business transforms curbside compost into garden gold

By STACEY MORRIS
Contributing writer

Joan K. Lentini photo

Bill Richmond, owner of Adirondack Worm Farm in Kingsbury, N.Y., displays a bin in which red worms consume food wastes and other organic materials collected from area homes to produce compost.

KINGSBURY, N.Y.

When Bill Richmond bought his 40-acre farm two decades ago, he had the idea that he would one day use the property for an agricultural purpose.

He also knew it would be a dream deferred. At the time, he and his wife, Tracy, were knee-deep in raising their two sons, William and Noah. And Richmond's job as vice president at Behan Communications in Glens Falls kept him more than busy.

Still, he always had an ear to the ground, so to speak, for the perfect opportunity to use his land for an enterprise that would afford part-time hours. The eventual result was Adirondack Worm Farm, a composting operation that employs several thousand worms to turn out its product.

Though he hasn't quit his day job, Richmond decided, with his sons now in college and high school, that the time was ripe for a venture in vermiculture.

"Vermiculture stems from the Latin word for worms and is basically anything to do with worms and composting," Richmond explained. "It produces natural, nutrient-rich fertilizer and is a great way to convert waste into compost."

Richmond serendipitously became aware of the subculture of vermiculture three years ago while doing online research on gardening. He decided to order a trial batch and learn the ropes of worm wrangling.

"There are more than 9,000 species of worms in the world, but only a half-dozen are good for composting," he said. "I use red worms, which are specific to composting."

These worms, he explained, are 3 inches long and live at top levels of the soil, where they consume decaying plant material.

He began his worm farm inside his home, with plastic bins of worm-rich soil, which he said is a common practice for vermiculture enthusiasts.

"I found the entire process fascinating and was impressed with the results we saw at home," Richmond recalled. "And I liked the idea of being able to reduce food waste," which he pointed out is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions when it's left to rot in landfills.

From wastes to healthy soil

The crux of the vermiculture cycle is this: The worms eat waste and in turn produce excrement known as worm castings. Hardly considered waste, the castings, also known as vermicompost, serve to nourish and protect budding plants, whether vegetables, flowers or shrubs.

After getting started in the house, Richmond decided to take worm wrangling to the next level by expanding operations to his barn.

"The worms like temperatures that people tend to like," he said. "They work best in a controlled setting between 65 and 75 degrees."

The fully enclosed barn keeps the bins of worms cool in the summer, and in the winter, Richmond keeps his brood comfy with a combination of insulated bins and strings of Christmas lights placed around the inside edges of each bin.

"Between the insulation and lighting, the worms survive the winter," he said. "With the proper conditions, you can have usable vermicompost in 60 to 90 days."

Richmond's worms consume a diet of various composting materials including all manner of food scraps, coffee grounds, pet hair, office paper, cotton T-shirts and threadbare jeans, old house plants, dryer lint and even the contents of vacuum bags.

The two-to-three-month composting time yields nutrient-rich vermicompost, the benefits of which Richmond said extend beyond fertilization.

Richmond pointed to research published in the Journal of Science of Food and Agriculture that he said shows vermicompost enhances soil fertility "physically, chemically and biologically." It's a natural alternative to chemical fertilizers and has been shown to yield increased pest and disease resistance, he said.

"The worms transform waste into something valuable, not just usable," Richmond explained.

With each pound of soil containing about 1,000 worms, Richmond estimates his current inventory to be up to 15,000 red composting worms, all toiling away in industrial-sized bins made of wood with slats on the bottom to collect the castings.

"It's truly a green process that reduces waste that would otherwise be dumped in landfills," he said.

Curbside composting

Richmond is quick to point out that achieving usable vermicompost is a collaborative effort. To do their job, the worms need compostable material, and for that, Richmond relies on the surrounding community.

Adirondack Worms began offering a pick-up service for food scraps, yard wastes and other compostable items from homes in Hudson Falls, Glens Falls and Queensbury. And this spring, Richmond expanded this curbside composting service to include Fort Ann, Lake George, Moreau and South Glens Falls.

"We provide them with five-gallon buckets, and we pick the buckets up curbside style," Richmond explained. "Our most popular level of service includes picking up every other week and leaving a clean bucket in its place, for $20 per month."

After a year of continuous service, a curbside composting customer will receive free vermicompost.

"It provides them back a useful product made from the waste they kept out of the garbage stream," Richmond said. "If a customer does not want their allotment of compost, they can request that we donate it to a community garden."

The company opened less than a year ago, and this will be the first full summer growing season for Richmond. His target audience is home gardeners and small farms.

"Because the vermicompost helps promote plant growth and speed development, gardeners will get a better growing yield in our short season in the Northeast," he said. "We're not really cost-effective for large farms, but we're considering doing it in the future. Right now, we're not ready for a large scale like that."

Adirondack Worms offers vermicompost via online orders at a cost of $15 for five pounds. In addition to handling retail sales, its website also has a blog as well as educational information on vermiculture.

A boon for gardeners

Before officially opening for business, Richmond said he gave some of his vermicompost to Paul Messina, a friend and avid gardener, to gauge the value of his product.

"I wanted a field test that went beyond theory," he explained.

Messina, who grows a variety of vegetables in his home garden, experimented with two batches of tomatoes and peppers he'd grown from seedlings.

"We started one group indoors with a heaping teaspoon of vermicompost mixed with the starter soil on April 1 of last year," Richmond recalled. "At the end of May, we transplanted them to the garden and again added a heaping teaspoon to the hole. As a control, we planted and transplanted tomatoes and peppers without the worm castings, using granular fertilizer instead.

"Messina said that the plants with the worm castings grew more quickly, and at harvest time, he noticed the peppers grown with castings were about an inch longer and plumper.

"There's a lot that science doesn't totally understand as to why worm castings are so beneficial to plants," he added. "It's not really comparable to synthetic fertilizer. Commercial fertilizer is more difficult to take into the roots, so they put more of it in, whereas with ours, it's not as difficult to absorb. It's part of a natural system."

Vermicompost also eliminates the risk of plants being "burned," as sometimes happens with synthetic fertilizers, Richmond said.

"Worms have existed for eons," he explained, so plants are well adapted to absorb nutrients from worm castings.

On a smaller scale, Adirondack Worms also sells bait worms using European night crawlers.

Richmond also gives community talks on vermiculture to spread the word to home gardeners.

"Vermiculture is a green practice, and it's also a nice, low-maintenance endeavor, because the worms are very self-sufficient," he said with a chuckle. "You can go on vacation and leave them. They'll be fine."

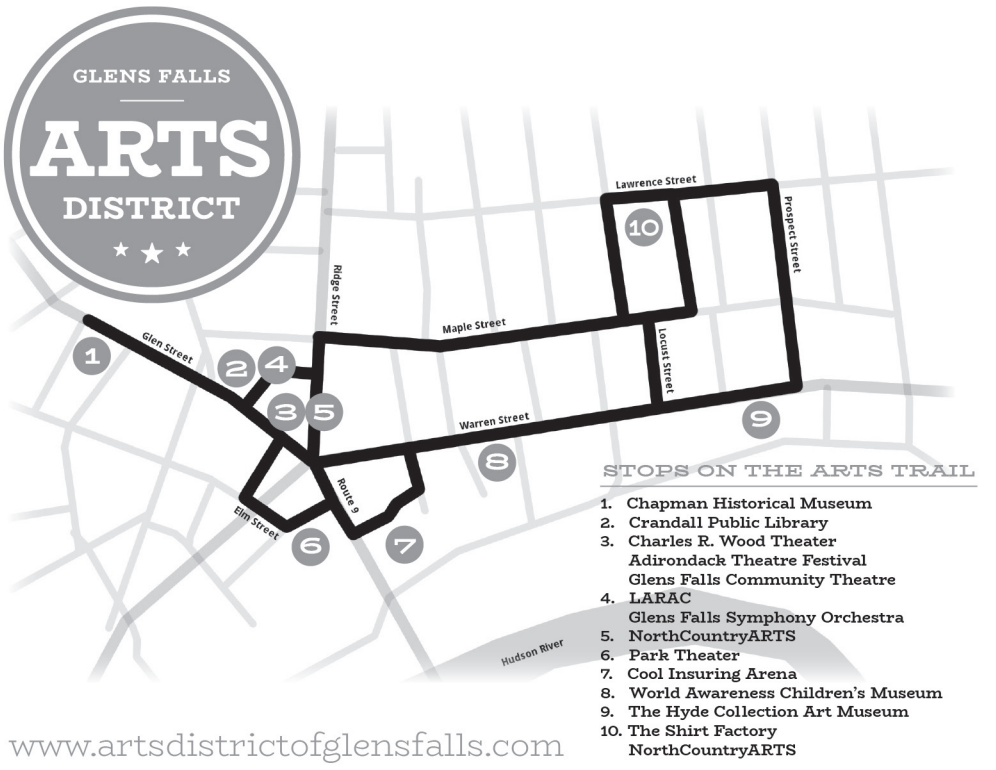
For more information about Adirondacks Worms, visit www.AdirondackWormFarm.com or call (518) 615-4696.

Destination: GLENS FALLS, NY

GETTING TO GLENS FALLS

- from Bennington 1 hour, 15 min
- from Cambridge 1 hour
- from Great Barrington 1 hr, 50 min
- from Hudson 1 hour, 45 minutes
- from Manchester 1 hour, 10 min
- from Pittsfield 1 hour, 45 minutes
- from Saratoga Springs 20 minutes
- from Williamstown 1 hour, 45 min

See map on page 11



STOPS ON THE ARTS TRAIL

1. Chapman Historical Museum
2. Crandall Public Library
3. Charles R. Wood Theater
   Adirondack Theatre Festival
   Glens Falls Community Theatre
4. LARAC
   Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra
5. NorthCountryARTS
6. Park Theater
7. Cool Insuring Arena
8. World Awareness Children's Museum
9. The Hyde Collection Art Museum
10. The Shirt Factory
    NorthCountryARTS

www.artsdistrictofglensfalls.com

ARTS&CULTURE

Courtesy photo/Amy Brentano

Flo Brett, a member of WAM Theatre's Elder Ensemble, is among those taking part in the theater company's Suffrage Project, an online work begun in May that explores the ideas of voting and citizenship.

The drama of democracy

WAM Theatre's Suffrage Project explores voting rights, citizenship

By KATE ABBOTT
Contributing writer

LENOX, Mass.

It's an election year, and the United States is bitterly divided. Thousands of Americans are dying. People are taking to the streets to demand change. Some of the protests turn violent.

In the Democratic primaries, a candidate with strong support on college campuses is upsetting the expected nominee as the race takes off. But historic events keep upending the contest, and the question of who gets to vote is becoming a life-or-death issue. The Republican candidate is deeply unpopular – and will one day face impeachment – but he narrowly wins a plurality of the national popular vote.

This is 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, the year Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated and Richard Nixon won the White House. And though women had won the right to vote nearly 50 years earlier, the Freedom movements and civil rights laws of the 1960s made this the first national election when many women, and many Americans, could cast their ballots.

Now, as the 19th Amendment nears its centennial, and with a new presidential election fueling a national conversation about the right to vote and the process of voting, WAM Theatre is creating new work around the idea of suffrage. The group is asking people to think about what voting is – what it means, and who gets to take part.

In May, WAM began the process of creating the Suffrage Project, a new work of community theater, online. They are working with ensembles of local people – an elder ensemble and an ensemble of people of color – and each group is meeting virtually to create their own stories.

"Even before Covid-19, we thought we have to do this now, and especially now, because of the election," explained Lia Russell-Self, WAM Theatre's associate producing director. "It's a pivotal election year."

So the theater company is giving people a place to talk about their lives: what living in this country means to them; how they define citizenship and allegiance; the meaning and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the isolation of the quarantine; how they feel in the lead-up to the 2020 election; and when voting has meant a difference in daily experiences as basic as getting a paycheck or dinner or walking home safely at night.

Adapting to a coronavirus era

At the beginning of the project, Russell-Self said, WAM had planned to work with the ensembles in weekend-long retreats where people could come and go and concentrate together on the work. Instead, the theater company has turned the ensembles into ongoing virtual gatherings, and they are creating new work to share online in June.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, theaters across the country are in a holding pattern right now, Russell-Self said. Stages in New York City have the lights down and sets still up, in the middle of productions that have closed. But companies like WAM are finding ways to go on.

"We can't stop telling stories," Russell-Self said.

The theater company – its initials stand for "where arts and activism meet" – sees this as an important time to share stories of citizenship and the power a citizen can hold.

"This is such an important election, and there are a lot of distractions," said Talya Kingston, WAM's associate artistic director. "But how people deal with catastrophes … depends on who's in power."

The Suffrage Project began in part to mark

the centennial of the 19th Amendment's ratification in August 1920, she said. The constitutional amendment affirmed that women had the legal right to vote. But for the next 45 years, the women who could exercise that right were mainly white and well educated.

"We have to talk about which women got the right to vote," Russell-Self said.

The 19th Amendment declared that the rights of citizens of the United States would not be denied, in any state, on the basis of sex. But states would continue to deny many citizens those rights on other accounts. And to others, the nation denied citizenship entirely.

Federal immigration laws, for example, barred people of Chinese descent from becoming citizens from the 1880s until 1943, and many Asian Americans weren't able to become citizens or secure voting rights until legal changes enacted in 1965.

And though the 15th Amendment gave black men the right to vote beginning in 1870, individual states, especially across the South, set up barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests that effectively denied this right for decades. The same tactics blocked black women from voting after they officially gained suffrage in 1920.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 finally threw out these state restrictions and made real the Constitution's promise of full citizenship for black voters. It also extended voting rights to Native Americans, who had been barred from voting in many jurisdictions for more than a century.

Theater on the ground

WAM has been growing its community theater programs in the last two years.

The company formed its Elder Ensemble last year, Kingston said. In their first season, the elders worked with a teen ensemble including LGBTQ teenagers.

Russell-Self said the elders formed a close group.

"After they performed last year, every other week they would get in touch with each other: 'Hey, do you want to hang out? Go to a show? Get together and be creative?'"

They felt a need to talk.

This year, WAM began exploring more ensembles, reaching out to people of color, veterans and immigrants.

"We want to make a space for all with an equal voice," Russell-Self said.

They are creating two new ensembles: an Immigrant Ensemble working with Multicultural

Bridge, a nonprofit group based in Lee; and a Veterans Ensemble with Soldier On, a Pittsfield-based group that works to end homelessness among military veterans.

The People of Color Ensemble began meeting in May. Russell-Self is co-leading it with Trenda Loftin, a theater artist from the Pioneer Valley. They have welcomed people from teens to 60s and a wide range of viewpoints and experiences.

"It is a needed space of belonging," Russell-Self said. "Every time I get to talk with someone, they've said, 'Thank you for creating this space. It's what I need right now.'"

They put the call out to anyone interested, and people responded. Some have been a part of WAM or the teen ensemble, some were involved with groups WAM has supported, and some got to know the theater company through its award-winning production of "Pipeline" last fall.

"That was such an incredible experience," Russell-Self said.

Dominique Morisseau's "Pipeline" focuses on a public school teacher trying to protect her son as he navigates a prestigious prep school, and it takes its title from a current of bias in education that leads black families into interaction with the justice system and can have devastating consequences, especially for young black men. WAM's production of the show opened a conversation with people in the community.

Before the first meeting of the new People of Color Ensemble, Russell-Self and Loftin asked all of the participants to create a work of their own on suffrage. In the early meetings, they will look at the work together. They took the first meeting to set the space and share stories.

"This topic can get personal," Russell-Self said. "Politics at the end of the day are personal matters. … It is important to honor everyone's experiences. We have people of all different races, backgrounds, migrant statuses. We want people to feel welcome. In my experience as an educator, … this is an arc of powerful ties. People immediately jumped in and wanted to be in a space with each other."

They had just been reading the first works.

"One work that spoke to me," Russell-Self said, "is about the pain we continually experience, that that person continually experiences. It is a poem about blisters and where they come from – a nervous tic to calm down every time someone asks 'What are you?' or 'Where are you from?' And they say, 'There's no one I can vote for whose blisters seem parallel to mine — no one who will stand up for me.'"

Looking across 50 years

Writers in the elder ensemble are reflecting on their own experiences with representation, and some of them can look back to 1968 and beyond.

Kingston is co-leading the ensemble with Amy Brentano, the artistic producing director of The Foundry in West Stockbridge. They want to hold a safe space, Kingston said, and also to give people a chance to find and turn over and understand ideas that are new to them.

"All of the members have different talents and skills – dance, music, art. … One is a stand-up comedian," Kingston said.

They gave each woman in the group a prompt to create an original work in any media: a monologue, a song, a poem, a photograph.

But they took time first just to talk. The people in the ensemble wanted to see each other, Kingston said. Some are living in isolation because of Covid-19.

"I taught some of them how to get on Zoom," she said, "and the delight of seeing faces again. … We had one woman who had said she couldn't create anything, and after the first meeting, she wrote a song."

They began to share stories about the first time they remember voting, what their ideal president would be like, times when they have felt divided allegiances, people who inspire them.

"There's a power in being together and being heard," Kingston said, "and having people to talk with.

"Activism lets you move forward even if you're stuck in one space."

She and Brentano have been working with the artists on their individual pieces – recording a choreographer as she dances in her home studio, helping the composer to record her song.

One member of the elder ensemble is writing a conversation between American suffragist Alice Paul, one of the leaders of the campaign for the 19th Amendment, and prominent British suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst. It has a flavor of Oscar Wilde, Brentano says, and a comic wit. It also has an edge to it. Pankhurst believed in increasingly direct confrontations – she and Paul were both arrested repeatedly, as they led rallies against obstructive national legislatures – and Pankhurst was willing to resort to violence.

Another member of the ensemble is creating a spoken-word poem in honor of a suffragist in New York City, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, a woman she recently learned about for the first time through Berkshire Museum's ongoing (and now virtual) exhibit, "She Makes History."

In 1912, when she was 16, Lee entered her first year at Barnard College, the sister college to Columbia, and she led a suffrage parade of 10,000 marchers through the city, riding on horseback. She fought for women's right to vote, knowing that as a Chinese American, she would not be able to it. She saw voting rights extended to Asian Americans only near the end of her life, before she died in 1966.

Working as a group

Brentano also hopes to create a work with the whole ensemble, even while the participants have to work from separate houses.

They have been experimenting with the Zoom camera, she said, playing with the frame, with movement and with cloth masks as props.

Kingston said they are exploring with gesture and connection and voice, creating a physical expression of community.

And the more they meet virtually, and the more they talk, the deeper they go. The conversation bridges past and present, and it can touch feelings of power and urgency and fear.

"They remember the civil rights movement," Brentano said, "and they talk about it and feel

See map on page 11

dismayed. They talk about current events.

"They remember the Equal Rights Amendment. They remember marching and burning bras. They have a sense of the women's movement. In the first meeting, we talked about black women not being able to vote until 1965. They are asking … 'How are we where we are right now?'"

They remember voting with their unions. They remember the election of 1968, and the draft, and the Vietnam War.

The Equal Rights Amendment, which would have guaranteed legal equality between women and men, seemed headed for easy ratification in the 1970s, winning support from 35 of the 38 state legislatures needed, before running aground in the face of a conservative opposition campaign.

The Berkshires felt those national currents. Williams College created its Africana Studies department in 1969 and admitted its first women students in 1970.

In Pittsfield, the Urban Renewal movement led to demolition of the old Union Station in 1968, with its Berkshire marble and tall windows, and the historic Hotel Wendell on the corner – and entire neighborhoods around West Street.

Live theater online

Kingston and Brentano find this shared exploration powerful and rich in possibility, though they both deeply miss the power of watching a live performance with an audience.

"Just breathing the same air – which of course is the one thing we're not supposed to do – is so powerful," Kingston said.

For now, they plan to share WAM's efforts virtually. Both ensembles will create and hone work in early to mid-June and, in time, to make it public through WAM's website and social media.

"We are not putting pressure on the artists," Russell-Self said. "This year, even before Covid-19, we were talking about relying more on the process than on the performance and giving the artists time to experiment and experience in the way they have to.

"We are cognizant and aware of that. At the same time, people are excited to be creating and find ways to share their work, and to create work as an ensemble."

The work the elder ensemble has created, since it began in early May, shows potential in virtual forms.

"It's powerful," Russell-Self said. "And I didn't expect that, as a theater person doing work outside of film. The ensemble magic still exists."

Russell-Self recalled reading "A Prayer for Theater," a piece by Larissa FastHorse, the playwright of "The Thanksgiving Play," which WAM has chosen for its Fresh Takes series in November.

FastHorse talks about what theater is, what it is meant to be and what can be.

"We're going back to the bare bones – storytelling and community," Russell-Self said. "That's what we're doing. Hearing your neighbor's story is so important and powerful. Especially now."

Thompson *continued from page 11*

Garfield went on to win the election but served only four months before being shot by an assassin. Vice President Arthur, another Vermont native, ascended to the presidency when Garfield died 11 weeks later.

In 1884, Edmunds was reported to be among the early front-runners for the Republican nomination if Arthur decided not to seek re-election.

Edmunds "never seeks honors, and accepts them with becoming modesty when tendered him," the *Northern Tribune* of Cheboygan, Mich., wrote in an editorial on May 1, 1884. "He would fill the presidential chair with modest dignity and marked ability."

At the Republican convention in Chicago that year, Edmunds received 94 votes on the first ballot – and acclaim for the spirited nominating speeches supporters made on his behalf.

"Of the seventeen speeches made in nominating and seconding the candidates during the evening, the most able was made was made by [former] Gov. [John Davis] Long of Massachusetts in nominating Edmunds, and the next best was made by George William Curtiss in seconding this nomination," a correspondent identified by the initials L.W.D. wrote in a report published June 18, 1884, in *The River Press* of Fort Benton, Mont. The writer allowed, however, that "possibly many others judge differently and prefer those made in behalf of their own favorite candidate."

Edmunds' first-ballot tally was considered a good showing for a reformer but far short of Blaine's 334.5 votes.

Edmunds' supporters knew the campaign was over when Montana changed its roll call response on the third ballot from "one vote for James G. Blaine and one vote for George F. Edmunds," its tally from the first two rounds, to "one vote for James G. Blaine and one vote for James G. Blaine."

"This was followed by an audible smile," *The River Press* correspondent wrote.

Blaine, in his third consecutive quadrennial try, won the Republican nomination on the fourth ballot and narrowly lost the general election to Grover Cleveland.

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.*

Food *continued from page 6*

she said.

"SNAP provides nine meals to every one meal from the food bank," Whalen said. "What we're doing is not sustainable and not meeting the demand."

When checks run out

In the Berkshires, the Salvation Army provides food assistance, free meals and other services at community centers in Pittsfield and North Adams. Food requests at the Pittsfield center "have tripled per week," said Capt. Elliott Higgins, who runs the center with his wife, Capt. Darlene Higgins.

"We're seeing all kinds of new faces showing up – individuals, families, seniors – from all walks of life," Elliott Higgins said.

The Salvation Army has a long history of working with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Administration and the American Red Cross in disasters, Higgins said.

"We're prepared for this," he said. "But we have the ability to reach out to more people."

The Salvation Army's Pittsfield center has adopted Covid-19 prevention protocols, including masks, gloves, sanitizing, and holding nonperishable foods for several days, Higgins said.

The center is delivering 350 food boxes a week to organizations in the southern Berkshires that distribute them to seniors, students and other people in need. Each box has enough essentials like cereal, canned food, rice and pasta to feed a family of four for five days, he said. The center is also delivering food to a shelter for homeless people who have tested positive for the virus.

The Salvation Army relies on longtime volunteers who have been trained and passed background checks.

"We rotate them in and out," Higgins said. "Usually it's a two-week deployment. This is every day."

Stimulus checks "will only take you so far," Higgins said. "Eventually it runs out. I don't see it getting much better until people can get back to work, and that's not going to happen any time soon."

Requests for food assistance from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts were up 6 percent from its Berkshire County partners in March compared with the same month in 2019, said Christina Maxwell, director of programs for the bank.

State and federal food aid "is coming in as normal," Maxwell said in an email. The bank is starting to receive some food from the Farm to Families program and expects pre-packed food from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

Supermarket donations "have dropped off substantially, but they're starting to return," Maxwell said. "We're purchasing much more than we normally do."

The food bank hasn't done any mass distributions in the Berkshires. Existing programs, including the bank's Mobile Food Bank serving North Adams, Adams, Dalton and Great Barrington, seem to be meeting the need, Maxwell said.

"Hopefully, the summer feeding program [for school-aged children] will be able to operate," she said. "Otherwise, we expect to see more families coming to pantries, meal sites, and the mobile food banks."

As restrictions are lifted, some people should be able to return to work and won't need food assistance, Maxwell said.

"But many people are very uncomfortable about returning to work at this point," she said.

And many people in low-wage jobs need food assistance even in normal times because they don't earn enough to support themselves and their families.

"They face something of a chronic emergency," Maxwell said.

Maxwell said Covid-19 is spotlighting weaknesses in the broader economic system and social safety net.

"As a country, we need to seriously examine many of the systems and structures that we see as normal," she said. "Many of these systems do not work for low-income individuals and other marginalized communities in the best of times, never mind during a pandemic. We need to stop talking about poor people as if they are criminals, we need to pay people a living wage, we need to provide health care benefits and child care assistance, and we need the federal government to supply adequate nutrition benefits so people can access the food they need to stay healthy."

Arts & Culture

Area Exhibitions

MOST 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 audio tour, download from website
• New! Audio guided tours, ages 6-12• available free on GeoTourist app
• Maintaining Creative Momentum – Weekly Projects to Make at Home! Sign up with email & get new project emailed every Thursday

The Arts Center Galleries • 518-584-4132 • www.saratoga-arts.org
• on-line classes, tutorials, discussions and more available at https://www.saratoga-arts.org/online-classes/
• through June 13: "Make Yourself at Home" featuring Lis David, Lisa Benanto, & Karen Gerstenberger

Bennington Museum • 802-447-1571 • benningtonmuseum.org
• Online Collections at https://bennington.pastperfectonline.com

Berkshire Botanical Garden • www.berkshirebotanical.org
• Visit the grounds while following current guidelines on keeping your distance • No restrooms

Berkshire Museum at Home • 413-443-7171
• explore.berkshiremuseum.org
• Jun. 6 – Oct. 9: "Art of the Hills: Narrative"

Carrie Haddad Gallery • 518-828-1915 • carriehaddadgallery.com
• Jun. 10 – Jul. 26: "Natural Worlds," by Jeri Eisenberg, Louis Laplante, Allyson Levy, Lori Van Houten
• Jul. 29 – Sep. 13: "Pattern Play," by Donise English, Bruce Murphy, Vincent Pomilio, Susan Stover, & Stephen Walling

Chapman Historical Museum • 518-793-2826 • chapmanmuseum.org
• ongoing: "Hands-On History Galleries: Experiences of Hometown Life" in the DeLong House

(Sterling & Francine) Clark Art Institute
• 413-458-2303 • www.clarkart.edu/museum/clarkconnects
• The Clark Connects • virtual programs • new content every Mon., Wed., & Fri. at 12 pm
• Jun. 27 – Spr. 2021: "Ground/work," outdoor exhibition featuring Kelly Akashi, Nairy Baghramian, Jennie E. Jones, Eva LeWitt, Analia Saban, & Haegue Yang

Columbia County Historical Society • 518-758-9265 • cchs@cchsny.org
• many ongoing, including: "Early Hand Tools & Farm Implements;" "100 Years of Collecting;" "A Study of Style: Caned Construction;" "Fragments of the Past: Van Alen Archaeology"

(Virtual) Courthouse Gallery • 518-668-2616
• www.lakegeorgearts.org/courthouse-gallery/
• through Jun. 12: Lee Malerich and Michael Van Winkle

Historic Salem Courthouse Community Center • 518-854-7053 • salemcourthouse.org
• Jun. 19 - Jul. 31: Bob Skinner

HVCC Virtual Gallery • https://www5.hvcc.edu/art-show/advanced/index.html
• through Aug. 31: "The Before, The After and In Between" Advanced Study in Drawing and Painting End-of-Year Show

The Hyde Collection Virtually • https://hydecollection.org • 518-792-1761
• through Jun. 14: "Images of the People: Russian Lacquer Painting"
• through Jun. 7: High School Juried Show
• Jun. 20 – Sep. 13: "Transformations: The Art of John Van Alstine" • J.S. Wooley, Adirondack Photographer

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

LARAC Virtually • 518-798-1144 • www.LARAC.org/lapham-gallery/current-exhibition
• "Feel It Still" with Nancy O'Hare, Damion Silver, and John Hampshire

The Mount (Edith Wharton's home) • 413-637-1899 • www.edithwharton.org
• ongoing: "Life in the Dale: Augustus Martin's Lenox" • "Edith Wharton and the First World War" • "The Backstairs Project"

National Museum of Dance Virtually • 518-584-2225 • www.dancemuseum.org
• ongoing: "Art of the Dance: Posters from Hollywood's Golden Age" • "On Being Still: Portraits by Joanne Savio" • "Dancers After Dark: Photographs by Jordan Matter" • "Gen" outdoor installation by sculptor Alice Manzi

Norman Rockwell Museum Virtually • https://www.nrm.org • 413-298-4100
• Quick Pics (K-6); Videos; From the Archives; Sketch Club; Listen and Learn; Virtual Tea and Talk; Explore the world of Project NORMAN; Learn from Home

North Country Arts Center Virtually • www.northcountryartscenter.org • Online: "What's Old is New"

Olana State Historic Site • 518-828-0135 • www.olana.org
• OLANA EYE Skycam at olana.org/OLANAEYE • follow @olanashs
• Olana's Historic Landscape Video Tour • https://www.olana.org/tour-category/virtual/

Pamela Salisbury Gallery • by appt. OR online at www.pamelasalisburygallery.com • check Instagram @pamelasalisburygallery every day at noon
• through Jun. 21: "The Earth Beneath Our Feet," by Ellen Driscoll, Margot Glass, Laura Moriarty, Laura Sharp Wilson

Rensselaer County Historical Society • 518-272-7232 • www.rchsonline.org
• "Rensselaer County Then and Now: Celebrating 225 years of Rensselaer County History"
• through Nov. 30: "How We Work(ed)"

Salem Courthouse • salemcourthouse.org • 518-854-7053
• Jun. 19 – Jul 31: Bob Skinner

Salmon Falls Gallery • 413-625-9833 • salmonfallsgallery.com
• Catalog of artists at website
• Jun. 5 – Aug. 2: Kate Whittaker: "Visual Poems: Original Prints"
• Jun. 5 – Aug. 2: David Ernster & Chris Archer: "Transitional Structures" works in clay

Sand Lake Center for the Arts • 518-674-2007 • slca-ctp.org
• through Jun. 30: Tom Chestnut
• Jul. 1 – Aug. 31: Summer Juried Art Show "The Power and the Glory"

Schantz Galleries • 413-298-3044 • www.schantzgalleries.com
• through Jun. 21: "In Spirit: The Art of Lino Tagliapietra"
• More than 60 artists online

SEPTEMBER Gallery • septembergallery.com
• through Jun. 21: thisisfair.org presented by New Art Dealers Alliance
• Jun. 6 – Aug. 9: Ashley Garrett: "Aegis" • To view, email Kristen@septembergallery.com

Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon VIRTUALLY • https://shakerml.org
• "Water and the Word" free app for 16-stop driving tour, from Behold! New Lebanon for the Shaker Museum

Sohn Fine Art Gallery • 413-298-1025 • www.sohnfineart.com
• through Jun 22: Re-View: A collaborative show between CATA and Sohn Fine Art artists

(Frances Young) **Tang Teaching Museum and Gallery** (at Skidmore College) • 518-580-8080 • http://tang.skidmore.edu/education/tang-at-home
• Tang at Home • art-making activities
• Tang Extra Credit • re-create works of art
• online as of May 30: Eleanor Linder Winter '43 Endowed Internship: Caroline Coxe '20: "Lover Earth: Art and Ecosexuality" • http://tang.skidmore.edu/exhibitions

Valley Artisans Market • 518-677-2765 • www.valleyartisansmarket.com
• through Jun. 9: Cheryl Gutmacher & Kathy Klompas – Mixed Media
• Jun. 12 – Jul. 7: Kevin Kuhme – Water Color

World Awareness Children's Museum • 518-793-2773 • www.worldchildrensmuseum.org
• Check Facebook for "Living Room Explorers" activities each week

Arts & Culture

THEATER LISTINGS

Adirondack Theatre Festival ● Any donation of $50 or more prompts an emailed password and provides unlimited access to digital content on www.ATFestival.org/ATFonDemand from Jun. 12-Aug. 7:

• "Glitches in Reality" (full performance) – A close-up magic act that features renowned Australian magician and winner of the World Championships of Magic that focuses on the truth behind illusion.

• "Think Again" (full performance) – Renowned mentalist, Max Major, uses magic, psychology, hypnosis and suggestion to demonstrate the untapped powers of the mind.

• "Nikola Tesla Drops the Beat" (concert video recording) – An electronic pop musical about one of history's greatest inventors, best described as "Hamilton" meets Tesla. This concert was filmed at Joe's Pub prior to the ATF performance.

• "Beau" (concert video) – Eight actor-musicians tell the story of Ace Baker, who spends the first decade of his life fatherless. At 12 years old, a phone call reveals that his grandfather, Beau, has been alive all his life . . . and his mother knew. This concert was filmed at Joe's Pub after the ATF performance and features the full ATF cast along with Broadway celebrities.

• "Eastbound" (concert video) – When Calvin, a twenty-something Chinese-American adoptee, is given six months to live, he decides to make good on his lifelong dream of seeing his home country with the little time he has left. This concert was filmed at Joe's Pub featuring what would have been the ATF cast. **Available ONLY during the original run dates of July 16-23. **

• "ATF'S Greatest Hits" (full cabaret performance) – Relive ATF's 25th Anniversary with a look back at the theatre's most memorable musicals! Revisit your favorite men in "Guys on Ice" and "Altar Boyz," your favorite sea creatures in "Mimi Le Duck" and "Loch Ness," and all of your favorite explosions in Tick, Tick . . . BOOM" and "Bomb-itty of Errors."

• Jeremy Schonfeld (composer of "Spun," "Calling All Kates") – Download Jeremy's latest album of music and watch his epic masterpiece, "Iron & Coal."

• "The Moon & the Sea" (concert video & downloadable songs) – Featuring a gorgeous score by Creighton Irons and a book penned by "Beau"'s Douglas Lyons—this breathtaking story captures the magic of falling in love . . . and the pain of letting it go. This recording was filmed during an early concert performance of the show. Watch the video and download the full album to become obsessed with the music like we are!

• "Jonathan Burns" (performance clips) – Goofy, curious and oddly flexible . . . Jonathan Burns has performed his unique blend of comedy and magic for audiences across the globe. Watch clips of Jonathan's hysterical performances on shows like Letterman, Leno, James Corden, and AGT.

• "Island Song & Toast" (concert video) – Musical Theater masters, Carner & Gregor, are known for their infectious music. Enjoy a concert performance of their music, recorded at 54 Below, that includes memorable songs from ATF's mainstage production of Island Song and cabaret performance of "Toast."

• "Matt Rodin" (album & music videos) – Matt was scheduled to perform his latest album, "Matt Rodin: Live at Home," for us this summer. Little did he know how perfectly titled his album would be. Now you can download and list to it at home along with some music videos he's provided us.

• "Brian Charles Rooney" (concert video) – This ATF favorite and star of "The Uncivil War" has a voice like no other. Watch him singing his powerhouse solos onstage in this video from a recent performance.

• "Calling All Kates" (concert video) – When Marc's fiancé, Kate, dumps him right before the wedding, Marc is left single, heartbroken, and with non-refundable, non-exchangeable tickets. In an act of desperation, he posts an online ad in the hopes of finding a stranger with the same exact name as his ex-fiance. Watch the 2018 development reading featuring Mike Nappi and Emily Crowley.

• "Brook Wood" (music videos) – Brook is well-known on the ATF stage for her electrifying vocals in "Spun" and "Nikola Tesla Drops the Beat." She's put together some music videos just for us—we can't wait to listen!

• "Start Again" (cabaret performance) – From the creator of "Nikola Tesla Drops the Beat" comes a moving new story about the love we lose, and the inspiring road back from heartbreak. Journey through the five stages of grief, as this powerful musical reminds us that no matter how shattered our world may seem . . . there's always a way to Start Again.

• "The Banana Tree" (full performance) - From the minds of "The Simpsons" stars, Dan Castellaneta (Homer Simpson) and Deb Lacusta (writer), comes a zany comedy about Angela, a convenience store clerk who dreams of being Las Vegas' first African American female magician. It was performed as a script-in-hand reading at ATF in 2015. This is a video of a fully staged production at Bloomington Playwrights Project.

• "Kalamazoo" (full performance) - This award-winning comedy about two 70-year-old widowers who meet online dating is the best-selling non-musical in ATF's history. This is a video of a fully-staged production at Bloomington Playwrights Project.

• "Set Building 101" (instructional videos) – Learn various technical skills with ATF's Technical Director, Andy Campbell.

● Video clips/songs from your favorite musicals – These are clips from the full ATF performances. We're permitted to share just a short bit (about one song) from each show.

● Film Festival Favorites on Demand (more online):

• "Skippers" (feature length) – AFF 2018 Best Feature Film. In this contemplative offbeat comedy-drama, a mysterious drifter breathes new life into a small town by teaching the Zen of stone skipping. But then he gets too close to the sister of a powerful local.

• "Lake Artifact" (feature length) – AFF 2019 Best Feature Film. Five friends pick up a drifter on their way to a cabin in Upstate New York for a three-day weekend of beer drinking. Upon arrival, they discover a picture of themselves posing at the cabin, which they've never been to.

• "If the Shoe Fits" (short) - Vinnie finds a shoe that's missing its other half and discovers his love for high heeled pumps.

• "An Air About Her" (short) - Two young women share a moment on the subway, but will they end up on the track to true love or will they miss their connection?

• "Dementia" (short) - After realizing their father is dying with dementia, two siblings must recreate an embarrassing moment from their childhood in an attempt to bring Dad back to being Dad one last time.

• "Death And Disco Fries" (short) - After finding out he is dead, Charlie has a chance to make good on a past regret.

Ancram Opera House • www.ancramoperahouse.org

"Real People Real Stories: Redux" • Jun. 27 • Livestreams 8 pm • A special fifth anniversary edition of the perennial audience favorite, bringing back some of the most memorable narratives told by local residents.

Great Barrington Public Theater • "Bear Tales: Six Feet Together" • 10 full-length, free, online streaming Solo Performances, filmed and directed from a safe distance • www.GreatBarringtonPublicTheater.org

1. "Baker's Revenge," by Jessica Provenz
2. "The Cherry Orchard 2020," by Carl Sragues
3. "Dorothy Kilgallen," by David Mamet, with Rebecca Pidgeon
4. "Eye of the Needle," by Andy Reynolds
5. "Final Words," by Michael Brady
6. "King Lear Boogie," by Will LeBow
7. "Meet The Deadlies," by Anne Undeland
8. "Old Straight Female White," by Alexandra Angeloch
9. "Playing the Part," by Elizabeth Nelson, with Aimee Doherty
10. "WomAnimal," by Cindy Parrish

Hudson Valley Radio Theater • Online at https://www.murdercafe.net/radio-theatre • Free, donations accepted

• Murder Me • The 1940s come to life as hardboiled detective Archie Morgan enters Café Malta searching for an escaped con. He discovers Waldo de Winter, the café owner, was murdered and his widow wants Archie to solve the crime and find the guilty party from a group of shady suspects.

• Sorry, Wrong Number • Classic radio suspense drama, written by Lucille Fletcher, first broadcast in 1945, involves an invalid woman who overhears what she thinks is a murder plot and her attempts to prevent it. She becomes increasingly desperate as she tries to work out who the victim is so the crime can be prevented.

• The Lodger • Based on Marie Belloc Lowndes' novel, the story concerns a serial killer known as "The Avenger" who is murdering young women. Before the evening is over another body is found. Who is "The Avenger" and has he struck again?

• Murder At The Speakeasy • Infamous bootlegger Dutch Schultz has opened a new speakeasy, the Abba Dabba Club, to give girlfriend Lu Lu a place to sing but flapper Rosie isn't having it.

• Death By Chocolate • Danny Crunkle, owner of Dan-Dee-Can-Dee, is merging his company with Hershel Crackleberry, his biggest competitor. Before Danny finishes his announcement gun shots ring out, a body falls and everyone scrambles for a piece of Danny's will. Who poisoned Danny's sweet deal and can his brother, rumbled detective Rick the Dick, be able to establish means and motive with this sketchy gang of suspects?

Arts & Culture

The Calendar May 2020

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
1 **Caffe Lena** • Stay Home Sessions: Kate Blain, Zan Strumfeld, & Mikael Mulholland • 8 pm (Youtube) **Bindlestiff Open Stage:** Quarantine Edition • Livestream 7:30 pm • Free, donations accepted • Fb & Youtube: bindelstiffcirkus	**2** **Club Helsinki** Virtual Open Mic • 7 pm • clubhelsinki.live **Caffe Lena** • Stay Home Sessions: The Music Heals Trio • 8 pm (Youtube) **Northshire** • Chris Bohjalian ("The Red Lotus") • 7 pm • northshire.com/event/ misc. **Berkshire Museum** • "Food & Fossils" • 5-5:30 pm • access link upon reg • explore.berkshiremuseum.org/events/family-trivia/food-and-fossils **Warren Co Coop Extn** • 6:30 pm • "Starting a Small Poultry Flock" • Free, Zoom • Reg. req'd: 518-623-3291 or jfb32@cornell.edu	**3** misc. **Hancock Shaker Village** -- Virtual Farm Friends • 11 am • free on-line; live on Fb, posted IG & YouTube	**4** **Northshire** • Amy Meyerson ("The Imperfects") & Alli Frank & Asha Youmans (co-authors "Tiny Imperfections") • 5 pm • Tix, pay-what-can • www.northshire.com/event/ misc. **Champlain Area Trails** • Nat'l Trails Day Hike • 9 am • champlainareatrails.com **Warren Co Coop Extn** --"Want Protein? Eat Plants!" webinar • 11 am • Sign up at mem467@cornell.edu --Family Fun w/Flowers webinar • 2-3 pm • Reg: warren.cce.cornell.edu/events **Art Omi** • Virtual Drawing Group • 5-6 pm • Zoom • Reg. req'd	**5** **Close Encounters w/ Music** • "Kohelet Part One" & "Part Two"; Sam Waterston, narrator; Yehuda Hanani, Kivie Cahn-Lipman, Do Yeon Kim & Michael Nicolas, cellos • Youtube **Jacob's Pillow** • Families Dance Together • Free, virtual • Reg. req'd at jacobspillow.org/events/class-families	**6**
8 **Bindlestiff Open Stage:** Quarantine Edition • Livestream 7:30 pm • Free, donations accepted • Fb & Youtube: bindelstiffcirkus	**9** **Club Helsinki** Virtual Open Mic • 7 pm • http://clubhelsinki.live **Northshire** • Wendy Williams ("The Language of Butterflies") w/Ted Williams ("Earth Almanac") • 5pm • www.northshire.com/event/	**10** misc. **Hancock Shaker Village** -- Virtual Farm Friends • 11 am • free on-line; live on Fb, posted IG & YouTube	**11** **Northshire** • Rebecca Dinerstein Knight ("Hex") w/ Marie-Helene Bertino ("Parakeet") • 5pm • www.northshire.com/event/ misc. **Warren Co Coop Extn** • 1 pm • "Outdoor Cooking" • Free • Reg req'd: mem467@cornell.edu **Art Omi** • Virtual Drawing Group • 5-6 pm • Reg. req'd	**12** **Caffe Lena** • Singing OUT Virtual Concert w/ Crys Matthews & Heather Mae • 8 pm • Youtube **Jacob's Pillow** • Families Dance Together • Free, virtual • Reg. req'd: jacobspillow.org/events/class-families	**13** misc. **Friends of Clermont** • Dahlias, Dyes & Desserts: Decorating Cakes using Edible Flowers • 1 pm • Free, online • Reg. req'd at www.friendsofclermont.org
15 **Bindlestiff Open Stage**: Quarantine Edition • Livestream 7:30 pm • Free, donations accepted • Fb & Youtube: bindelstiffcirkus	**16** **Club Helsinki** Virtual Open Mic • 7 pm • clubhelsinki.live **Northshire Live:** Bloomsday (day Joyce's "Ulysses" takes place) • 5pm • www.northshire.com/event/ misc. **Warren Co Coop Extn** • 6:30 pm • "Starting a Meat Rabbitry" • Free • Reg. req'd: 518-623-3291 or jfb32@cornell.edu	**17** misc. **Hancock Shaker Village** -- Virtual Farm Friends • 11 am • free on-line; live on Fb, posted IG & YouTube	**18** **Northshire** • Rosalie Knecht ("Vera Kelly Is Not a Mystery") w/Tracy O'Neill ("Quotients") • 5pm • www.northshire.com/event/ misc. **Art Omi** • Virtual Drawing Group • 5-6 pm • Zoom • Reg. req'd	**19** **Jacob's Pillow** • Families Dance Together • Free, virtual • Reg. req'd jacobspillow.org/events/class-families	**20** **Jacob's Pillow** • "Dance We Must: A Virtual Event Supporting Jacob's Pillow," featuring live performances • 7 pm • Free • Reg. req'd for access • https://jacobspillow-dance.formstack.com/forms/dancewemust
22 **Bindlestiff Open Stage:** Quarantine Edition • Livestream 7:30 pm • Free, donations accepted • Fb & Youtube: bindelstiffcirkus	**23** **Club Helsinki** Virtual Open Mic • 7 pm • clubhelsinki.live	**24** misc. **Hancock Shaker Village** -- Virtual Farm Friends • 11 am • free; live on Fb, posted after IG & YouTube	**25** **Friends of Clermont** • Harmonies on the Hudson Concert: "Sweet Marie" • 6 pm • Clermont SHS & Friends of Clermont YouTube **Northshire** • Crystal King w/Stephanie Storey ("Rafael: Painter in Rome") • 5pm • www.northshire.com/event/ misc. **Art Omi** • Virtual Drawing Group • 5-6 pm • Reg. req'd	**26** **"Freihofer's Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions"** • sched TBA by SPAC.org	**27** **"Freihofer's Jazz Fest Stay Home Sessions"** • sched TBA by SPAC.org **Caffe Lena** • Melissa Ferrick • 8-10 pm **Ancram Opera House** • "Real People, Real Stories: Redux" • Live stream 8 pm • Free • RSVP for link
29 **Bindlestiff Open Stage:** Quarantine Edition • Livestream 7:30 pm • Free, donations accepted • Fb & Youtube: bindelstiffcirkus	**30** **Club Helsinki** Virtual Open Mic • 7 pm • clubhelsinki.live	**Northshire** • GMALL EVENT: Julia Alvarez ("Afterlife") w/Barbara Morrow • 5:30-7:00			

Destination: BENNINGTON, VT

George Bouret photos

GETTING TO BENNINGTON

- from Cambridge: 30 minutes
- from Glens Falls: 1 hour, 15 minutes
- from Hudson: 1 hour, 30 minutes
- from Manchester: 30 minutes
- from Pittsfield: 50 minutes
- from Saratoga Springs: 1 hour, 15 min
- from Williamstown: 20 minutes

See map on page 11

Park-McCullough
Historic Governor's Mansion

Park-McCullough Historic Governor's Mansion is thrilled to announce that Kelly Clarke has just become our newest member of the Board of Directors!

Kelly is an Architect at Centerline Architects in Bennington. She grew up in Glastonbury, Connecticut, where she developed an appreciation for the link between history and built structures. She went to school at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, and was awarded the AIA Henry Adams Certificate at graduation.

Kelly holds an NCARB Certificate and is a member of the American Institute of Architects. She specializes in higher education, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and design for accessibility. Kelly also serves as a coach and educational content writer at BlackSpectacles, a coaching program for designers pursuing an architecture license.

Kelly is interested in community development and has volunteered to design and to fundraise for the Park at 336, a public park in downtown Bennington. She is a member of the Advisory Board for the Shires Young Professionals and formerly served on the Board of Directors for the Better Bennington Corporation. She participated in the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Vital Projects Selection Committee in 2019 and 2020.

In recognition of this work, she was named a Southern Vermont Emerging Leader at the 2019 Southern Vermont Economy Summit and as a 2019 Vermont Rising Star by Vermont Business Magazine.

"We are very excited to have her part of the Park-McCullough Team. Her expertise, community involvement, and passion for historic preservation will be an asset for our organization as we continue to bring Park-McCullough to new heights." Christopher Oldham, Executive Director.

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