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A Special Supplement to
The Caledonian-Record and
Orleans County Record
highlighting the many successful
businesses of the Northeast Kingdom
and North Country



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A look at Thayers Inn from around 1909.

Thayers Welcomes Guests For 175 Years

BY LEAH CAREY
Staff Writer

Thayers Inn has been under new management for the past year and it's been a time of big changes. "We made a lot of improvements to the hotel and inn and restaurant," said general manager Gary Plourde. "The biggest thing for us is to increase the business, and we've had very good growth in the last year."

Upgrades have included a new wi-fi system, new reservations system, new website, a new boiler, new beds and bedding, a multitude of room improvements, and refreshing the outside of the building.

"They're all big-ticket items, but that's the infrastructure you need to keep people warm and happy," Plourde said.

He and his wife Sandra both have backgrounds in hotel management, and more recently have begun taking over management of struggling hotels and turning them around. Their first project was Christmas Farm Inn in Jackson, New Hampshire. Now they're working hard at Thayers and hoping to make a mark on Littleton's Main Street.

"Before we took it over, it didn't have a buzz. It was this dark

hole. You walked by and nobody took notice because nothing was happening," Plourde said. "Our ambition is to make it a thriving focal point for Main Street. I think Main Street in Littleton is a really cool place. I like the shops and restaurants and places like Schillings. To be part of that, and a hub where people can stay and congregate and be part of the town, that's what our goal is."

The five-story hotel has a storied history, having played host to presidents and movie stars. At 175 years old, Plourde said it is the oldest hotel in the White Mountains.

That is a big draw for people from Europe, where the Plourdes have set up contracts to open new avenues for tourism.

"We brought a whole bunch of international to Littleton and the hotel ... We'll be seeing a lot of Europeans in town now," Plourde said. "They don't want to stay at the Holiday Inn or the Hampton Inn, which is just another hotel. They want to stay in something that's uniquely New England. And Thayers is definitely that."

The Plourdes took over management of the hotel in a joint venture agreement with the current owner, Thomas Carpi, who currently acts as a "silent owner."

"We have four years to take ownership," Plourde explained. "Everything is going in the right direction. We have some benchmarks that we want to achieve to make sure we have cash in the bank to do what we want to do."

While the timeline for purchase is not yet set, Plourde is optimistic. The goal is to show a significant uptick in business and strong financials so that a bank will offer attractive financing for the purchase.

The Plourdes are grateful for the support they receive from locals. People travel from all over the area to dine at Grille One Eleven, the restaurant on the lower level of the hotel. They have also recently created a new event facility for meetings and functions.

"There's really not much meeting space in Littleton, so we're hopeful that will grow for us," Plourde said.

Having spent much of his career working in Europe, where "old" is measured on a different scale than in the United States, Plourde said that they are thrilled to be part of a venture with such a long and rich history as Thayers.

"175 years - we even have Europeans who say, 'That's old!'" Plourde said. "To be part of that history is cool."



A more recent view of Thayers Inn on Main Street in Littleton, N.H..

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Email: larrysr@momsnorth-country.com

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The original Passumpsic Savings Bank is seen in this historic view of St. Johnsbury's Main Street.

Passumpsic Savings Bank Turns 165 Years

BY ANDREW MCGREGOR
Staff Writer

This year marks the 165th anniversary of a local landmark and major institution in the region: Passumpsic Savings Bank.

Passumpsic Savings Bank was officially chartered when Gov. Erastus Fairbanks, of St. Johnsbury, signed the act creating the bank on Nov. 23, 1852. This marked the formation of the first savings institution in St. Johnsbury and the new bank started business soon after that, opening its doors for the first time on Feb. 24, 1853. It was founded by prominent members of the community as a mutual saving bank, which had no stockholders.

At that time, the fledgling bank shared office space with the old Passumpsic Bank, a commercial bank, in a building on Main Street near where the fire station is now. On its first day of operation, 17 people deposited a total of \$863 in the bank. The first depositor on the books was Samuel W. Slade, a St. Johnsbury attorney and one of the bank's original incorporators.

The creation of the bank filled a void for residents of the growing town, who before that had to travel to Danville to save their money. Danville was the county seat then and housed the only other repository for savings accounts in the immediate area.

While the bank catered to a community need, for the first few years it was only open one day a week, Thursdays – and even then its operating hours were from 2-5 p.m. Despite these constraints the bank grew and finished its first year with \$32,208.99 in assets and paid its treasurer \$100 for his year of work.

Town and Bank Grow Together

The birth of Passumpsic Savings Bank coincided with an era of notable growth in St. Johnsbury. On Nov. 28, 1850, the first train arrived from Boston on the newly completed railroad. In 1851 St. Johnsbury was further connected with the world by the stringing of the first telegraph line to town and in 1855 St. Johnsbury became the county seat and construction of the Caledonia County Courthouse was completed.

Population was also on the rise during this time as St. Johnsbury had a population of 2,760 people in 1850 and by 1860 the population had grown to 3,470.

In the early years the bank moved back and forth across Main Street several times, bouncing from room to room and house to house, depending on who the current treasurer was and where there was space.

During this time accounts were opened with as little as a single dollar. Depositors were encouraged, though, to notify the bank in advance if they wanted to withdraw funds from their account as the bank's first rule book explained.



The Passumpsic Savings Bank branch on Railroad Street in St. Johnsbury.

“People may become sick, or otherwise want their money after they have put it in. It is provided that they may take it out when they please, but they must give previous notice of their intention to call for their money. The reason of this rule is this, if the money could be called for any day of the year, without previous notice, the Trustees could not lend it out or employ it to the advantage of those who put it in.”

Withdrawals in those days were simple, yet graciously worded, notes addressed to the treasurer of the bank, which often started “Sir - Please to pay the Bearer (so many) dollars, from my deposits in your Institution.”

The bank generally enjoyed continued growth throughout this time until it was big enough to build its own building. In 1884, the bank obtained the deed to a piece of property on the east side of Main Street and began construction of the three-story brick structure that was completed in 1885 and still houses some of the bank's investment operations today.

The building was constructed by local artisans using locally produced bricks that cost one cent apiece and the total price tag of the building, including the land, was \$15,000. That same year the bank treasurer was receiving \$1,650 a year, which included money for a clerk and \$500 for a bookkeeper.

The bank, then situated in a permanent home, continued to grow in customers and business through its centennial celebration weathering world wars, recessions and even the Depression. In 1953 the bank boasted assets of over \$6.2 million.

Geographic Expansion

Since then, Passumpsic Savings Bank has had significant growth both geographically and financially.

The bank expanded to Newport when it opened its first branch in 1964 and then into Lyndonville with another branch in 1974. Additional branches followed in Newport, St. Johnsbury, Lyndonville, St. Johnsbury Center, Danville and Island Pond in 2002.

In 1995 the bank also opened a loan center in Littleton, marking its first expansion out of state. A

full-service bank followed in 1999 named Passumpsic Bank under a New Hampshire charter, which was merged with Passumpsic Savings Bank on Jan. 1, 2002, with the adjustment of interstate banking laws that allowed the bank to operate in both states. Passumpsic now has branches in Littleton, Lancaster, Groveton, and Whitefield, New Hampshire.

All told, Passumpsic Savings Bank has 10 branch locations and 14 ATMs throughout the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and North Country of New Hampshire. Their Investment Division, Passumpsic Financial Advisors, which is celebrating 20 years of service this year, has an experienced team of professionals ready to assist clients with comprehensive plans to meet their investment goals.

Northeast Home Loan, a subsidiary of Passumpsic Savings Bank, was also formed in 2000 to provide timely, efficient and professional mortgage banking operations to selected community based mortgage originators and lenders in New England.

Along with the geographic and service expansions, the bank has grown financially, reaching just over \$640 million in assets last fall, and the bank now employs over 150 people.

“Passumpsic Savings Bank, from our humble origins on Main Street in St. Johnsbury, after all these many years remains firmly committed to promoting the prosperity of the communities we serve,” said Jim Kisch, President/CEO, Passumpsic Savings Bank. “While our mission and values have remained constant, our services continually evolve to meet the growing financial needs and expectations of people and businesses in our region. Passumpsic Savings Bank will remain as dedicated to serving and supporting our customers, the needs of our communities, and organizations that enrich our northern way of life as we have for more than a century, long into the future. Thank you to those of you who have allowed us to serve your families, organizations, and your companies along the way.”

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Workers load building supplies at Allen Lumber Co. in St. Johnsbury.

Allen Lumber: Five Generations Of Leading Service, Expertise & Price

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

Allen Lumber has been operating a store on Bay Street in St. Johnsbury since 1963 and continues on in today’s marketplace dominated by big box stores by competing on price, selection and what is known as the secret sauce of any successful retail business. “Service,” said Tom Allen, the fifth generation member of the Allen family that founded the company 130 years ago and still runs the company and its four locations statewide. “Anybody’s got price. It’s the extra things we do for our customers and the knowledge that we have here.” The company also has stores in Barre, Montpelier and Waitsfield as well as its popular Kitchen and Bath showrooms. Allen, who is from Barre and runs the company with his brothers, said he decided to take over the St. Johnsbury location 25 years ago so he could take advantage of Northeast Kingdom living. “I came out here basically for the (St. Johnsbury) Academy,” said Allen. “And because I wanted

to live in the Kingdom.” He says his employees at the St. Johnsbury store have hundreds of years of experience handling home improvement and construction projects. “Howard (Jones), my guy upstairs has been here for 45-46 years,” said Allen. “He does doors, floors and windows. Full houses, designs.” He says that while national home improvement chains are known for sales and “loss leader” items designed to attract new customers Allen Lumber can compete on price with anyone and excel with customer service in ways that box stores can’t. “That’s not their gig,” said Allen. “In the long run, you’re not just paying for the product. You’re also paying for the knowledge and the service that goes behind the project.” “I’m delivering it free and I’m telling you what my contractors use and why this is better and really, in the long run. If you checked prices you probably haven’t paid a nickel more for it.” Allen Lumber Company got started during Vermont’s building boom of the late 19th century.

According to the company’s website, the company was founded in 1888 by Stillman Allen who retired in 1918. For a short time the company was owned by his nephew, Claron Allen. Claron’s son, Loren was only 19 years old when he took control of the company after his father’s death and ran it for the next 60 years. Bob Allen became president of the company in 1970, and took complete control when his father retired in 1978. In 1984 he turned operation of the company over to his five sons including Tom Allen. In addition to being officers of the company each brother handles a different segment of the company’s day-to-day operation. The business now serves both homeowners as well as contractors using computer-aided designs and Home Showcase showrooms upstairs in all the stores to display the products. Allen’s Kitchen & Bath Showroom in St. Johnsbury, is located on Railroad Street and features a 4,000 square foot showroom with over 20 kitchen and bath displays.



Palmer Brothers owner Frank Rothe stands in his dry cleaning business on Jan. 19, 2017. He purchased the business in November 2012. This year, Palmer Brothers will reach 105 years of operation in downtown St. Johnsbury.

Celebrating 105 Years In The Dry Cleaning Business: Palmer Bros.

BY DANA GRAY
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — The cleaning machines continue on Eastern Avenue as Palmer Brothers Dry Cleaning & Laundry reaches its 105th year at the same downtown location. Located at 179 Eastern Ave., the business in a 6,500-square-foot facility, is in the sixth year being owned and operated by Frank Rothe. The full-service dry cleaning and laundry business that serves both sides of the river and grew through three generations of Palmers was purchased Nov. 1, 2012, by Rothe. The business was started in 1913 by Cecil Palmer. Rothe bought the business from Charlie Palmer, a third-generation Palmer who, after graduating from UVM in the 1970s, inherited it from his father, Cy, who had taken it over from his father, Cecil.

Rothe employs five people in the pressing, cleaning, spotting and steaming business. He said equipment upgrades in recent years have made for processing that is faster, better and more energy efficient. Also, Rothe said the company utilized “green” cleaning for a more environmentally-friendly process. They maintain several contracts with government agencies, to include the Vermont State Police and the Department of Corrections. Palmer Bros. runs a delivery vehicle throughout the region, extending to Montpelier, Fairlee, West Stewartstown, N.H. and Bretton Woods, N.H. Palmer Bros. also has a pick-up site at Sew Much More in Littleton, N.H. In the few years Rothe has owned the century-plus-old business, he most appreciates his customers and his employees. What he least appreciates: the utility

costs of running his business. Business hours for the dry cleaning shop are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday. There are no Sunday hours. Rothe said he is happy to maintain a business in downtown St. Johnsbury that has endured for so long. “It’s nice to be able to carry on a tradition,” he said. “People mention [the longevity of the business]. They’re glad we are able to keep it going.” He said there aren’t many dry cleaning businesses left. He said textiles have changed to make the professional process less necessary and “business dress has changed.” “You’re not wearing a suit coat like your predecessors did,” Rothe said, referring to this reporter as an example of how attire in the business environment has become less formal.

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Hastings Store has been a fixture at the junction of routes 2 and 15 in West Danville for the last 105 years.

Hastings Store A Family Affair For 105 Years

BY SALLY COOK
News Correspondent

WEST DANVILLE — The Hastings Country Store is celebrating 105 years under Hasting family ownership. Current owners are Jane Hastings Larrabee and her husband Garey Larrabee, both Justices of the Peace who happily perform weddings at the store.

Not long ago a couple in their 80s came to the store for ice cream. That desire satisfied, they asked where they could find someone to marry them while standing in front of the store's ice cream freezer.

"My wife can do that. She's right here," Garey told the couple. Jane married them, as they explained this was the perfect spot since it was the sweetest place in the store. "I said I hope you didn't have to get married," he said in jest. "Turns out they had been living together for 45 years, and they wanted to make sure the other person got what they had saved in the end."

Actually the store itself was up and running in 1853, until Jennie Underwood Hastings, a business college graduate and her local business man husband Gilbert Hastings bought the store in 1913.

Jennie became a post master of the store's in-house Post Office in 1914, a tradition carried on by the store owners until this day. After Jennie and Gilbert retired, Jane's parents Mabel and Ralph Hastings ran the store until Jane and Garey took over in 1974, even though they hadn't planned to.

Ralph Hastings became post master in 1946, following his ser-



In this 2005 file photo, the Larrabee family of Danville poses behind the counter of the Hastings Store, which has been in Jane Larrabee's family for generations; she is seen with her husband, daughter and grand-daughters.

vice during WWII. Retiring at 77 years old, he was then the longest serving post master in the state.

With only five part-time employees to run the store there has been some intergenerational overlapping. That continues as their daughter Jenny, a full-time nurse who lives nearby, helps out often with her two daughters Alyssa, 8, and Ava, 5 nearby.

While it may sound like fun to have a country store, it is a lot of work, owners say. "I work 24/7," Garey quipped. He became post master in 1992, continuing his postal career. Under his leadership, a special Indian Joe post mark and customer appreciation day celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Joe's Pond Association on July 3, 2010, at the West Danville Post Office.

The event also commemorated the Abenaki Old Joe, known as the friendly Indian guide. He died

in 1819 and is buried in Newbury where he was born. Joe was left for dead by his fellow Indians after a fight with white settlers. But, one of the settlers found him alive, took him in and nursed him back to health. From then on he became their alarm before any Indian attacks, according to a local history by William Parker Neal.

At the edge of Joe's Pond, the Hastings General Store strives to keep up with customer demand recently adding breakfast sandwiches, soup and a wide variety of deli sandwiches, plus beer and wine. The store is popular with tourists, so there are plenty of souvenirs, post cards, and other interesting items.

"Great old time general store, a little bit of everything. Employees are so friendly. Visit every time we are in Vermont," one visitor commented on the store's Facebook page.

Riverside Life Enrichment Center Celebrates 30 Years

Owner: Peter Coutu
Address: 2104 East Burke Rd
Lyndonville, VT 05851
Email: rlec@sover.net
Year of Founding: 1988
Type of Business: Adult Day Health Services
Number of employees: 14
A brief history of the business:

The Riverside Life Enrichment Center, originally known as New Move Adult Day Services began offering services in St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville in 1988 via an initiative with the Northeast Kingdom Area Agency on Aging. In these early days, the program offered limited day services in space available at the St. Johnsbury House and at the Darling Inn in Lyndonville. In 1992, the program became an independent entity and rented approximately 150 square feet within the Catamounts Arts building, in the former Post Office structure on Eastern Avenue. By 1998, in need of additional space, the program moved to a location on Portland Street within the building that once housed the community's "roller-skating rink."

Under new management, with an increased focus on meeting the ever-increasing medical needs of Adult Day participants, along with



a growing demand from the community for Services, the search was on to find substantially larger facilities. On Jan. 29, 2001, the program moved to its current location on East Burke Road, Route 114 in Lyndonville along the Passumpsic River.

An outline or highlight of the business offerings:

Riverside is an Adult Day Health Center that offers Community-Based, Person-Centered, non-residential services to adults over the age of 18 who have physical and/or cognitive impairment as well as for any adult aged 60 or more. We provide a safe, sup-

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The Fitch Fuel Co. team today. Front row, left to right: Marilyn Foss, Patricia Rexford, Lindsey Dingman, Charles W. Fitch III. Second row, left to right: Joshua Fitch, Jamie Normand, Christopher Foss, Derek Foss, Andy Caouette. Part of the team, but unable to make the photo: John Fitch, Eric McVetty, Nick Emery.

Lancaster's Fitch Fuel Co.: A Young 95

Fourth-Generation Siblings Setting Up Business For The Fifth Generation

BY ROBERT BLECHL
 Staff Writer

LANCASTER — They say the older you get, the more you slow down.

Not Fitch Fuel Co., run by four generations of the Fitch family, which this year celebrates a young 95 years in Lancaster and offers a range of services that have expanded through the decades.

"It's been really busy," said company secretary and treasurer Marilyn Fitch Foss, a fourth-generation Fitch who owns the business with her brothers, Charles Fitch III, company president, John Fitch, vice-president, and Patti Fitch Rexford, office manager.

"We picked up 85 new customers since the cold snap," she said.

But what began as a business that saw its busiest season during winters, has turned into an enterprise that sees much activity year-round.

Today, the company has more than 2,000 customers as far north as North Stratford and Columbia, as far south as Littleton, and as far west as Maidstone, Lunenburg, and Gilman in Vermont.

"We go quite a ways," said Fitch Foss. "Our guys are busy."

Fitch Fuel distributes home heating oil and propane, sells diesel fuel and kerosene, has a propane filling station on site at its 178 Summer St. location, and offers 24-hour plumbing and heating services through fully licensed plumbers and servicemen



William Fitch, about 1960.

It also offers 24-hour emergency service when customers, experiencing plumbing, heating or other emergencies, need it, even on weekends and holidays.

Fitch Fuel had humble beginnings and was founded in 1923 by Foss Fitch's great-grandfather, Charles Fitch, in the Fitch family home on Winter Street.

He started out distributing coal, range fuel, and ice for ice boxes that area residents had before refrigerators became available.

In the 1940s, the business was changing to fuel oil, though Fitch Fuel continued delivering coal until 1970s.

Generations of the family took the helm through the years - Charles' son, William Fitch; Charles Fitch II, Marilyn's father; and Charles Fitch III, her brother.

In 1976, the business was moved to the former telephone building on Summer Street as it expanded to include plumbing and heating services.

"It was coal and ice, then he went to fuel," said Foss Fitch. "Then they bought a couple of plumbing businesses in the area."

Fitch Fuel also offers year-

round furnace and boiler cleanings to ensure peak efficiency and safety.

In 1976, after being located on Winter Street, it moved to Summer Street, where it continues today as a plumbing and heating company that serves customers on both sides of the river with a staff of 12.

As the company nears 100 years in business, it is preparing for the next generation of owners.

"We're working on setting up the fifth generation, said Foss Fitch. "We have four of our children involved."

Foss Fitch has two sons, Derek Foss, the fuel department manager and an oil truck driver, and Christopher Foss, the company's business and service manager.

Charles Fitch III has a daughter, Lindsey Dingman, the fuel department manager, and John Fitch has a son, Josh Fitch, a certified heating technician.

Foss Fitch has been with her family's business for 33 years. What keeps her and her family at the helm is helping others.

"I like working with people," she said.

East Burke Sports Marks 30th Year

John Worth, Partner, Helped Start Kingdom Trails

EAST BURKE — This year marks the 30th anniversary for East Burke Sports, located in the heart of the Village, across from Kingdom Trails and the Northeast Kingdom Country Store.

The business is jointly owned by John Worth and Vince Jacob.

John Worth had a hand in the beginnings of Kingdom Trails and sells passes at their 4-season ski and bike shop. He knows the trails as well as anyone around.

The partners rent and sell skis — their heritage — and have added bikes to their inventory through the years, now a staple of the business, too.

On the business's website, it notes, "These guys started from scratch."

"After legitimizing what is now known as Kingdom Trails Association in 1994, (Worth) has seen this town through thick and thin. With the ever growing popularity of the trails, it is reflected so in his business. He now spends less time in the shop to do more of what he loves, design trails. He is proud to have this shop here in this town."

Worth is a longtime instructor



at nearby Burke Mountain Resort, where he's taught for years. His favorite KT trail is the Troll Stroll; his favorite Burke Pike Park trail is the Knight Slayer, according to the shop's website.

Jacob is as hard to find in the summer at the shop as Worth is during the winters, when he's at the mountain. Jacob is also a full-time painter, according to the website.

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Marshall Insurance Agency in Lancaster, which grew from a small company specializing in insurance for farmers, to a medium-sized agency serving customers in three New England states, celebrates 90 years.

Marshall Insurance Evolves Over 90 Years

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LANCASTER — What began as a small insurance agency for local farmers has grown into an agency that now has a second office in Coos County and today offers complete insurance services for customers in three states.

Marshall Insurance Agency turns 90 this year.

"It was founded in 1928 by Chester Marshall in an effort to offer competition," said Gregory Westcott, who currently owns Marshall Insurance with his wife, Lynette Westcott, making for four generations of owners. "Back then, there wasn't much. He literally started out selling farm insurance."

He started out called the Farm Bureau and then changed the name to the Marshall Agency.

Chester Marshall's son, Rodney Marshall, entered the business as it grew.

In the early 1970s, John Brooks, Lynette's father, bought into the agency as a partner with Rodney Marshall.

Greg and Lynette, who met while they were serving in the Navy, joined the business in the latter half of the 1980s.

Greg had initially been looking to set up a welding shop in Burlington, Vt., until his father-in-law asked them if they wanted be a part of the company.

They did, and bought Marshall Insurance from John Brooks in the late 1990s.

"It's been a very good investment for us," said Greg. "We have been growing the business ever since."

Six years ago, they expanded by establishing another branch office in Berlin, making for two offices on both sides of Coos County.

The agency had a couple of homes in Lancaster before moving to its current location at 92 Main St.

The Stickney home, now the site of Rite-Aid, was the original



Greg and Lynette Westcott, owners of Marshall Insurance Agency in Lancaster.

location when it operated out of a home.

It then moved to a commercial building, long since gone, that is now the parking lot, off Main Street, of Sullivan's Irish Pub.

That was the location when John Brooks was partner.

"When I came to work for him, his one question was do you have any big plans," said Greg. "I said, yes, move to Main Street. We didn't have a physical presence on Main Street."

The Sears store was going out of business and Marshall Insurance would soon occupy the more visible Main Street space.

"By my calculations, we would increase business by 2 or 3 percent," he said of the move there in the early 2000s. "And it's worked out quite well. We are happy."

Between the two offices, in Lancaster and Berlin, the Westcotts have nine employees. One is their daughter, Paige Elizabeth Westcott, who after graduating from Norwich, runs the Berlin office.

"We have more employees in the Lancaster office, but we work together as an agency and can forward calls between the branch offices," said Greg. "We all work together as a team to solve insurance problems for our clients."

Today, Marshall Insurance is considered a medium-sized in-

surance agency and is licensed in N.H., Vermont, and Maine.

It offers insurance for homeowners, vehicles, teen auto, boats and RVs, snowmobiles, motorcycles, and business, and partners with 15 insurance companies across New England and the nation.

"We enjoy helping people when they are in a time of need," said Greg. "We do derive a lot of satisfaction by helping people save money on their insurance premiums."

Although Marshall Insurance Agency does compete with on-line insurers, there will always be a segment of customers that want face-to-face interaction, he said.

"You leave here with insurance and you know your agent," said Greg. "In your time of need, if you unfortunately have an accident, you come in here and we help you."

Those wanting to get into the insurance business do not need a formal degree and can work their way up and go as far as they want to in the industry, he said.

"It's a good profession for younger people to consider," said Greg. "We weather recessions, we do well in good economies. Insurance, not literally, though figuratively, makes the world go around ... The spectrum of life is covered by insurance."

A house fire or catastrophe can create a mini-economy of sorts, that puts electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and others to work, he said.

"When people pay insurance premiums, it goes go back to the community," said Greg. "That money does get returned to the community in a time of need."

The Westcotts are happy to be in a profession where they can make a difference.

"When my father-in-law gave me an opportunity, I saw the value in it," said Greg.

He said, "It's been an interesting journey."

Good Shepherd Catholic School Turns 20

Year of Opening/Founding: 1998

A brief history of the business: GSCS began because of a deep desire in the community for a Catholic School after Catholic Central closed in 1971. In 1996 a group of St. John the Evangelist parishioners and clergy met to discuss the possibility of re-opening the former Catholic Central School, closed in 1970, or establishing an entirely new Catholic School. With the blessing of Father Joseph Lively, the pastor of St. John's, a steering committee of 15 parishioners formally began plans to start a new Catholic school. The steering committee proceeded to assess and repair the building to bring it up to code. Vermont Bishop Kenneth Angell and the Diocesan Administrative Board approved the opening of Good Shepherd Catholic School for the 1998-1999 school year as a Diocesan school. The steering committee became the Good Shepherd Catholic School Board.

Good Shepherd opened in 1998 with 47 students enrolled in grades K-6, plus 21 pre-school and pre-K students. The School Board authorized the addition of grades 7 and 8 in 1999 and opened



that year with an enrollment of 117 students. In June of 2000, we had our first graduation, with two students graduating to ninth grade. Robert Gessner was principal for the school's first 12 years and the school even utilized space at the Father Lively Center for a number of years.

The school continues to grow and offer many opportunities for leadership, excellence and spiritual development.

An outline or highlight of the business offerings: Good Shepherd Catholic School's mission is to prepare students for a life of learning, service, compassion, personal excellence and faith in God. There are a wide variety of offerings, including rigorous core classes as well as French, music, drama and art. The school employs 1 to 1 technology in grades

5-8 and has a dedicated maker space within the library. There are many leadership opportunities built into the school day and regular community service is part of the culture although it varies grade by grade. There is an outdoor classroom which is utilized by all grades and disciplines, and the school's central location allows students to take advantage of the many activities the town has to offer including Catamount Arts performances, Fairbanks Museum exhibits and Athenaeum displays and readings. The school has a soccer team as well as a highly respected basketball program for grades 4-8 as well as an after school running club.

In addition to the strong academic program, there are many other after school activities including knitting, chess and origami club, math camp and special camps run by Siskins and the Northwoods Stewardship Center.

GSCS is a school with experienced and supportive teachers with amazing opportunities for its students.

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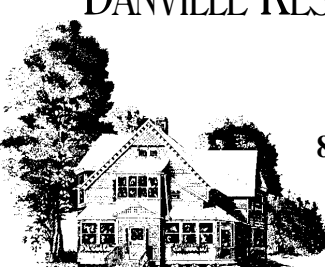
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Auctioneer Reg Lussier turns on the charm at the Caledonia County Fair.

Lyndonville Auctioneer Reg Lussier Keeps Making Local Crowds Smile

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

For decades Lussier Auction has been in the business of selling off pretty much anything that needed to go for the best possible price.

Antiques, estates, livestock, farm & construction equipment, real estate and property from bankruptcy.

The Lyndonville company is in its third generation with the children and grandchildren of founder Roger Lussier now involved in the company.

Roger Lussier started Lussier Auction in 1952 and his son Reginald P. “Reg” Lussier joined him in 1973 and is now marking his 45th year in the business.

Reg Lussier, who is well-known for his friendly smile and beloved New York Yankees cap while behind the auction microphone, says his father taught him the business and gave him some good advice.

“Take care of your clients,” said Reg Lussier from his home office in Kirby.

Reg Lussier, said he’s seen it all during his years in the business.

“I once sold an armored personnel carrier,” said Lussier. “I think it was in the early 1980s.”

Lussier said that back in those



Lussier Auction founder Roger Lussier.

days there was a small market for military surplus vehicles that could inspect and perform maintenance along power lines. He said the machine went for a pretty good price considering its narrow appeal.

“There’s not may people that want one,” said Lussier.

Today he works with his son Toby Lussier and son-in-law Matt Young to run the company which is licensed, bonded, and insured in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut. They have all equipment needed for a successful auction including tents, chairs, public address system and

cattle ring.

Each year Lussier Auction kicks off the Caledonia County Fair with a benefit auction just before the fair officially opens for its annual late summer run.

The auction began the year after the original fairgrounds grandstand burned to the ground on Aug. 18, 1993 – just a few days after the fair had closed. In 1995, the all-metal grand stand was built. But it was expensive. Proceeds from the annual Lussier auction go to help pay off the bank note.

Lussier says the golden era of auctioneering was in the late 1970s and early 1980s and that the world of digital devices and the Internet has had a big impact on the auction business. But those purchasing antiques through a smart phone are missing out on the fun of attending a live auction, said Lussier.

He says the entertainment aspect of live auctions remains alive and well and it’s that connection with audiences he embraces as he continues the family tradition on behalf of his clients. He says it also helps business.

“If you can make your crowd smile and laugh a bit you can do better,” said Lussier.

Lussier Auction and is a member of Vermont and New Hampshire Auctioneer’s Associations.

Celebrating 55 Years: Frances Atkinson Residence For The Retired In Newbury

BY SALLY COOK
News Correspondent

NEWBURY — The Frances Atkinson Residence for the Retired located in the charming village of Newbury is celebrating 55 years of serving older people who may need some help and companionship in a cozy home-like atmosphere.

The spacious, old two-story Colonial on Main Street offers 13 rooms (most with private bathrooms), a full-service dining room, library, on-site beautician, large screened-in porch, a garden, and a wide variety of activities to keep the young at heart active in mind and body.

The non-profit was opened as a retirement home in 1963 as an outreach program of the United Church of Christ and named for the former owner of the property. It is licensed by the state and ranked as one of the Best Care Centers for assisted living in Orange County, according to the BCC web site.

“Our goal is to help residents stay active and involved, while supporting independence for as long as possible,” according to the facilities web site. “We strive to create a warm, congenial family ambience in a smoke free, safe and comfortable environment.”

There aren’t many dull moments for residents who are freed from what were previously probably daily chores of cooking, cleaning and laundry since those services are provided, according to Director Peg Degoosh.

“A wide variety of activities, I guess that covers it,” she said, explaining what she meant. “Monday the beautician is here and



Residents and staff at Frances Atkinson Residence for the Retired enjoy a visit from Santa.

we call it spa day, Tuesday the book club meets in the morning and the 1st and 2nd graders come here in the afternoon – it’s a huge success, everyone loves it – then Wednesday we have card games, cribbage and dominoes, Thursday is the foot clinic, Friday afternoon there’s arts and crafts, Friday night is Bingo night (complete with prizes), Saturday is movie and popcorn night and Sunday are church services.”

In between all those activities professional entertainers like Rusty Dewees and Patrick Ross donate their time, and a resident’s son plays old favorites on the piano. Volunteers from area schools come to visit and provide assistance that residents enjoy.

“We’ve been very, very fortunate here to have many special entertainers and students come here,” Degoosh said. “We have also adopted two kittens, who have the run of the place and I bring my dog, a standard poodle

for residents to enjoy.”

On the dining side of the business, she said they have a large garden that provides food and residents can, freeze, and preserve produce for the winter. Bread making is on the list of things to be done in the future, she added.

Degoosh’s professional career until joining the Frances Atkinson Residence in August of 2016 was based in mental health in schools, as a clinician, and in private practice. Assessment work for involuntary placements she said gave her a different perspective, as did her father’s health problems that led to his living at the Grafton County Nursing Home.

Both led her to appreciate her present position and understand better how she could help residents here.

“I found out there was a tremendous need to have someone listen and understand,” she said. “I have learned so much since I’ve been here.”

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COURTESY PHOTO

Present day staff members at Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice, a division of Northern Counties Health Care, Inc. The building is named after the former Caledonia Home Health Care executive director, Joan Blankinship.

Caledonia Home Health Celebrates 50 Years Of Serving The Community

BY ROSIE SMITH
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice, a division of Northern Counties Health Care, Inc., celebrates its 50th year of serving the community this year.

Caledonia Home Health Care was established in 1968 under the leadership of Dr. Ralph Jardine and a group of community members interested in the provision of home health care services. In 1981 Caledonia Home Health Care expanded its services to include hospice and hospice home-making services.

In 1985, an “Analysis of Organizational Options” was completed by the Vermont Health Policy Corporation. The analysis recommended a merger between Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice and Northern Counties Health Care, the first Federally Qualified Health Center in Vermont (FQHC), founded by David Reynolds in 1976. The Caledonia Home Health Care executive director, Joan Blankinship announced her retirement and David Reynolds, the executive director of Northern Counties Health Care, was named Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice’s executive director.

The formal merger of Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice and Northern Counties Health Care, Inc. was completed in 1988. Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice continues to grow today under the leadership of Treny Burgess, director, and Shawn Tester, chief executive officer of Northern Counties Health Care, Inc., a not-for-profit organization.

Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice provides comprehensive in-home care and support services to persons of all ages throughout Caledonia and southern Essex counties through a variety of programs. Maternal and child health nurses provide medical treatment and preventative education to pregnant women, new mothers and children.

Long-term-care case managers coordinate homemaker, personal care services and community resources affecting the social determinants of health to chronically ill individuals to allow them to



COURTESY PHOTO

The groundbreaking ceremony for the future site of Caledonia Home Health Care and Northern Counties Health Center on Sherman Drive in 1987 — from left, Barbara Smith, Northeastern Vermont Regional Corp.; John C. Smith, Northern Counties Health Centers; and Patty McLam representing Caledonia Home Health Care Agency.

remain at home. The home care and hospice team includes highly skilled nurses, medical director, rehabilitation therapists, medical social workers, clergy and nurse aides who work together to promote healing and independence for some, and comfort, guidance and assistance with end-of-life decision making for others.

Director Treny Burgess has been with Caledonia Home Health Care for over 20 years. “It is a unique experience to see a patient in their own home, to form a relationship beyond the walls of a facility. Our staff spend countless hours with patients and their families, realizing the joys and challenges they experience every day. What a privilege it is to share a new mom’s excitement when her child smiles at her for the first time, to hold a young man as he takes his first step with his artificial leg, or to hold the hand of a woman as her husband takes his final breath. I am blessed to work with some of the most generous and compassionate people in serving our community every day.”

Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice/Northern Counties Health Care, Inc. has joined community partners in forming the

Caledonia and Southern Essex Accountable Health Community in an effort to work collaboratively and improve the health and well-being of the people in the communities we serve. This includes addressing issues known as the “Social Determinants of Health”: Financial security; physical and mental health; food security and housing.

Shawn Tester, CEO of Northern Counties Health Care, said, “The work we do at Caledonia Home Health & Hospice is incredibly important to the fabric of our local health care system, but we recognize it takes all of us working together to create healthy communities. Through our partnerships, we are transforming how we care for our patients and how we work together to improve the health outcomes for the people we serve. Together with our partners, we are committed to creating a vibrant, prosperous communities.”

Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice/Northern Counties Health Care, Inc. is located at 161 Sherman Dr., St. Johnsbury. The organization employees 125 individuals. For more information, go to www.nchevt.org; email info@nchevt.org; or call 802-748-8116.

Celebrating 45 Years: Timson’s Building & Siding, Inc

TBSI

himself while working with Maurice Colby and David Clough. A couple of years later he started out on his own full time. From there the company expanded into managing and renovation of apartment buildings and building storage

sheds at Junction 2 & 18 Self Storage, LLC.

An outline or highlight of the business offerings:

Timson’s is a full-scale building and remodeling company that specializes in replacement and new-construction windows and doors, and vinyl siding. They build from the ground up or will happily accommodate small renovation projects.

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Four generations of loggers, clockwise from bottom left, Jackson Mitchell, Jr., with son Jackson III (holding grandson Jackson IV), son Matthew, and father Jackson Sr., holding the crosscut saw he began logging with.

Jackson Mitchell Logging Turns 50

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

Jackson Mitchell began logging with horses and handsaws. Today he uses grapplers and skidders, loaders and excavators. Much has changed over the years, but Mitchell remains the same, a hard-working son of the Northeast Kingdom who has made his living in the woods, one tree at a time. And he has the scars to prove it.

"I'll tell you what, if you work in the woods you earn every dollar," Mitchell said. "It's hard work."

He traces the origin of Jackson Mitchell Logging back 50 years to when he attended the Lyndon Campus School and a teacher, June Elliott, hooked him up with a firewood order.

"This was before I even had a driver's license," Mitchell said. "[Mrs. Elliott] got me an order of firewood for the St. Johnsbury House, they wanted some white birch firewood."

This was back when Mitchell was assisting his father, Jackson Sr., a Korean War veteran who spent time working for the railroad and Fairbanks Scales before settling into a logging career, beginning on the John Hall Farm in Newark.

The only boy among four children, Mitchell was raised in the logging industry, in the days before skidders, and quickly grew to like it.

"[My father] started out with a horse, I used to help him, I used to ride the horse back and forth,"

Mitchell said. "I worked for \$3 a day. Every summer I tried to get my dad to go up another buck a day."

The firewood business grew slowly over time, with Mitchell originally charging \$16 per cord, loading the wood into the back of his father's truck, and making deliveries half a cord at a time.

Eventually they replaced the horses with skidders, the handsaws with chainsaws, and added various other heavy equipment to make the difficult and dangerous job a little easier and safer.

In time Mitchell graduated from Lyndon Institute and took the business over. He would buy properties, log them, then sell them. He estimates owning 1,500 acres at one time.

Today the business maintains around 200 steady customers and annually sells over 400 cords of wood. They also cut logs for lumber and pulp.

"It's grown into a real good business," Mitchell said.

Over time there were challenges, with mounting regulations and fluctuating prices, but Mitchell persevered thanks to Yankee wisdom, a sharp business mind, and good relationships with customers.

He also practiced ethical logging. Sure, he was complying with regulations, but he also had an awareness of forest management, knowing that over cutting was bad for the environment.

"You've got to take care of the forest and leave it good for the next generation," he said.

That next generation includes sons Jackson III and Matthew, who are expected to carry on the business when Mitchell retires, which he expects will be sooner, rather than later.

He's earned it. Mitchell sports all manner of scars. He's been struck by falling limbs, nicked by an axe, and cut with a chainsaw. It speaks to the dangerous nature of logging. "You name it, it happened," Mitchell said.

Something else that happened: Mitchell developed a soft spot for trees. Some of them, at least.

For the past 20 years he has occasionally left old, tall trees standing. He can't quite explain why, but there's a connection between the logger and the tree, who have both spent decades in the forests of the Northeast Kingdom.

"I'm getting old, and some trees I just won't cut. I'll just let it grow," Mitchell said. "I've left a few great big pine trees on a hillside, where the only person that really knows the tree's there is me. I can come down [Interstate] 91 and see where I've cut, and I can look over and see that big pine tree is still standing."

In a time when loggers are fewer and further between, Mitchell is a throwback to a different time, and he considers himself fortunate to have grown up in the timber industry.

From horses and handsaws, to skidders and grapplers, he's enjoyed the ride.

Said Mitchell, "I've had a great life in the woods and I love it."

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A brief history of your business:

Morrill & Guyer Associates, in Lyndonville, was founded in 2008 by Annie Guyer and Don Morrill, natives of the Northeast Kingdom. In 2012, Don retired, selling his half of the business to Annie.

Annie has been in real estate for more than 20 years. She grew up on a family dairy farm in Peacham and graduated from the University of Vermont. In addition to marrying a Lyndon resident and raising four children in the Lyndon community, she is a long-time member of the Lyndon Area Chamber of Commerce, director at the Lyndon Outing Club and is a Certified Residential Real Estate Appraiser. Recently Annie became a co-owner of NEK Cycling Studio LLC, which is also located at 791 Broad St. in Lyndonville.

Agent Michael Channon is a native to the Northeast Kingdom, born

and raised in Newark, where he resides with his wife and two children. Being an avid outdoorsman, in conjunction with his real estate knowledge, has helped Mike in his own real estate ventures and enabled him to create a solid foundation and understanding of the market.

Agent Kristianne Dwinell is also a native to Vermont. She resides in Sutton with her husband Dennis and their children. She enjoys running, biking and hiking, and is familiar with the area and all it has to offer. She is eager to assist you in buying or selling your property in the Northeast Kingdom.

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Morrill & Guyer Associates are in the business of helping people with buying and selling property. The seasoned, professional agents grew up in the area and have the understanding of the local community to serve the public well. Their focus is always on the customer's needs and making sure the experience of buying or selling property is enjoyable and successful. Morrill & Guyer is not affiliated with a chain or big company — the agents have the time to build strong relation-

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PHOTO BY AMY ASH NIXON

The Miss Lyndonville Diner has been run by the Gray family for 40 years.

Miss Lyndonville Diner Turns 40

Homemade Pies,
Community,
Diner Classics
Still Popular

BY AMY ASH NIXON
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — When Vermont Life Magazine named the Miss Lyndonville Diner as the best place to have homemade pie for breakfast a few decades back, that one article alone put the place on the map.

From there, other food writers visited from The Boston Globe, The New York Times, and more, recalled Janet Gray Burnor, who opened the diner on Broad Street (Route 5) in the heart of Lyndonville in 1978 — 40 years ago this year.

Of that Vermont Life piece, "It was a fantastic turning point for us!"

"The building was brought into Lyndonville in 1951," said Burnor, who opened Miss Lyndonville with her late husband, Ashley, a beloved figure whose name is still spoken in the popular restaurant on a daily basis. She remarried a few years ago, but said her and Ashley's dream, their management style, their commitment to the best food possible and friendly service is still very much alive all these years later.

Two of her stepdaughters, Ashley's daughters from his first marriage, Kim Gaboriault and Heidi Sanborn, work in the family business and help to keep Miss Lyndonville humming, said Burnor.

"It had different names. It was the Rustic Restaurant when we bought it and we changed it to the Miss Lyndonville Diner, and way back it was called the Miss Lynn Diner. It was an original diner," said Burnor in a recent interview from her winter home in Florida. "We were looking for the diner thing, with fresh food, to be the heart of the community."

Both Janet and Ashley, who were veteran restaurant employees having met at a Big Boy franchise in Toledo, Ohio, where she is from, were newbies to being owners — it was daunting.

Ashley's family had celebrated the holidays in Canaan, Vt. when he was growing up in Florence, Mass. and he loved Vermont. She remembers the family, his three children who she is stepmom to, and their daughter together, a family of six, coming up and checking out the area and falling in love with Lyndonville.

Ashley's dad had been part-owner of The Miss Florence Diner in his hometown.

They had seen a photo of the breathtaking Willoughby Lake on a phone book cover, so came up to explore on a family vacation, she said. They weren't sure how they'd make a living here, but wanted to move their family here for the schools and the way of life in northern Vermont.

"I was scared to death in the beginning," said Burnor. "I remember Ashley told me, 'Don't worry. We are going to stand here and do what we've always done. We'll be fine.'"

In addition to Heidi and Kim being so critical to the operations of the restaurant — Heidi in the office and Kim on the floor at the diner — the restaurant has also had longtime, loyal employees who are like family, emphasized Burnor.

Travis Butts, the store man-



PHOTO BY AMY ASH NIXON

Miss Lyndonville Diner Chef Reid Asaro puts up an order on a recent afternoon.



ager, gave his son Ashley for his middle name, he's such a part of the family and has worked at the diner since he was 14.

"Ashley hired Travis, and he said to me at one point, 'Travis is the best employee I have ever seen.' He loved Travis like a son," said Burnor. "Travis loved Ashley like a father. Travis learned from him, it was a tough love kind of thing."

"One of the special things about the diner is that special sense of community," said Burnor. "The locals have brought so much to the table over the decades — they call me at home and tell me things! They've been extraordinarily helpful over the years."

When the diner first opened, the Grays were open 5 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday-Saturday, so they could be home with their kids at night and have Sundays off. "We had one part-time employee and one full-time employee, that's how we started, and then it got to the point if one of us got sick, it would have been a problem."

The menu in the early days had just eight items, and today has dozens, said Burnor.

"It grew and changed over time," she said. "We put six additions on the building, to the point where we had to go up!" The lot is tight, with a hillside directly behind it and Route 5's busy traffic right outside their front door with little buffer.

At one point, wanting to expand, the Grays thought about bulldozing the building and constructing new. "It was put out there and those guys had a fit, they said, 'You have got to be kidding! You can't do that!'"

Classic sandwiches and platters have been favorites for years, including the North Country Special, The Vermonter, The Swiss Lad, and The Hamburger Deluxe, said Burnor.

"You always know what to expect when you go to the diner, because those core things never change," she said.

The fame of the Miss Lyndonville has traveled far and wide, said Burnor, "We had a customer tell us we were a question on Jeopardy!"

The pies which landed the diner in that fateful Vermont Life edition all those years ago still are a source of deep pride,

and include fresh strawberry and blueberry, chocolate cream, maple cream, mile-high coconut and banana cream pies, and the diner's special hot fudge ice cream cake.

"Those are the ones that have been there from the beginning," said Burnor.

Burnor said, "I would say the diner is 50 percent us, and what we do, and 50 percent of what the people bring to it. The atmosphere of the diner is so unique."

That atmosphere, she said, "is definitely created by the energy between our customers and our staff." People pick up on a conversation they started the day before, and the rapport is infectious, she said. "Even when tourists come in, they can recognize that ... It's where you come to meet your neighbor. It's almost like anything that's going on in the community goes on in the diner. It's wonderful, it's so special, and I do think it's unique."

Regulars of the Miss Lyndonville have been on a first name basis with longtime staff for decades in some cases.

Roy Grant has been eating at the diner twice a day for years, he said. He's been a customer since before the Gray family owned it. He estimated he's been a regular for a half-century.

On a radio program sponsored by Grant's construction business, people are told they can find him at his second office, the diner. He starts his day there at 5:30 a.m. most days, he said, and comes back later in the day for lunch.

Grant was good friends with the late Ashley Gray, and continues to come to the diner where he gets both good food and fast service, and camaraderie with the staff and locals he's friends with.

"The food is good," said Grant, saying the diner is like his second home — it's such a big part of his life.

He's not alone. The diner has many locals that are that fiercely loyal, and who patronize the diner at least once a day — if not more.

"I know the people here, the food is the best in town, and the service is fast," said Shawn Kincaid, who was seated with Grant on a recent weekday afternoon, finishing up lunch. "I'm friends with most of the people here. It's the best place in town to go to."

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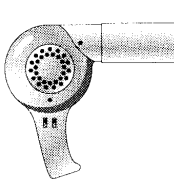
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PHOTO BY ROSIE SMITH

Wayne Comeau, at right, is shown with customer John Findlay, who is in the process of cleaning out his mother's home. Wayne purchased some items from John's mother's estate. In the background are some of the many coins Wayne has purchased and has up for sale — a key component of his business at Route 5 Antiques & Collectibles.

Old Coins Is Key Component At Route 5 Antiques & Collectibles

BY ROSIE SMITH
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — A lot of changes have taken place since Wayne Comeau first started dealing in antiques and collectibles back in 1993. Those changes have affected the business greatly, especially the EBay phenomenon, and the next generations of adults that don't have an interest in collecting antiques and items, like their parents and grandparents once did.

Wayne started the business in 1993 as a hobby — "it started out as a hobby, then I kind of fell into it." Previously, he ran a successful excavating business in the area for many years. He wanted to "simplify his life."

At first, Wayne rented a spot in an antique store which operated out of a building on Broad Street in Lyndonville, which at one time housed a fitness center. Deciding he wanted to be on his own, he and his wife Pam purchased the building at their present location, now Route 5 Antiques & Collectibles at 277 Main St. in Lyndonville, and have been there ever since, at one time living in the apartment over the store.

Wayne has rented "booths" to vendors, for many years having up to 35 individuals using space in the store. The age group of these vendors was in the 50s to 60s. These vendors would have spaces rented all over New England, when antiquing was so popular.

As these vendors passed away or moved on, there was decline in people wanting to get into the business. Now he is down to three vendors.

Wayne also deals with "pickers," people who purchase truckloads of items and bring them to his store. When they show up, he has to buy the whole load. Then the next day, customers show up to see what his recent purchases consisted of. He has always kept track of what his customers are looking for, so he can give them a call when an item they are looking for shows up.

In order to cut down on inventory, Wayne will group together enough items to fill a trailer and bring them to auction. He believes it's better to sell them for whatever he can get, as opposed to sitting in his store and not going anywhere.

The top seller in the store is collectible coins, Wayne said. This aspect of the business — buying and selling old coins — is still going strong. Wayne takes this part of the business very seriously and wants to give his customers a fair price when buying their coins, or selling them the coins they've been looking for.

Wayne talked about a collector in Panama City, Fla., Larry Lee, owner of Coin and Bullion Reserve, who showed up in Route 5 Collectibles a couple years back. Lee had purchased a rare 1913 Walton nickel for over 2 million dollars in 2013 and made national news. When Lee showed up at

Route 5 Collectibles, Wayne realized who he was. When asked why he purchased the nickel, Lee said "he trusted that nickel more than I trust the banks." Lee has returned to Route 5 Collectibles for the last two years, and has actually purchased some coins from Wayne.

"It has been a good business, up until about 10 years ago when EBay came out," Wayne said. Before EBay, people didn't have many options for selling their merchandise. "Now they put it online, but they never get what they think they're going to get," he added.

Wayne still has on display a collection of dishware, toys, tools, furniture, etc. At one time, he would purchase from estate sales, but not so much anymore. People are into selling their own items, not realizing that most of those items are not as valuable as they once were. "The younger generations just aren't interested in collecting and antiques."

Wayne has a warning for those who are "pack rats." He said, "there's no way I'm going to leave my house like some do, for their kids to clean up" after their gone.

His words of wisdom, "Don't fall in love with something that doesn't breathe!"

Wayne is the proprietor and sole employee of Route 5 Collectibles. The store hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, closed on Tuesdays.



COURTESY PHOTO

Pets in one of the special play areas at North Danville Pet Hotel.

A Special Stay At North Danville Pet Hotel

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

For close to 20 years, the North Danville Pet Hotel, at 1319 North Danville Rd. in Danville, has been giving pets the preferred guest treatment.

Founded in 1998 by Sarah Ely, the pet hotel has been owned and operated by Laurie Speicher since 2003.

Speicher purchased the business from Ely after discovering the pet hotel by chance and at the

absolute right time.

"I moved in from Pennsylvania," said Speicher. "The Pocos. A friend of mine moved up here and I had driven her up here and I really loved the area. So I went home and she called back and told me this place was for sale. And I've always loved dogs and I so thought this would be a great opportunity to move up to a fantastic state and this business is great. I love it."

The pet hotel features two social areas for dogs that allow the dogs to run around and play with

each other. There is one for larger dogs and one for smaller ones. The two areas also give Speicher flexibility in dealing with the varied personalities of all the dogs she has as guests.

"If there's some dogs that don't get along with other ones, I will put 'em in with the smaller ones," said Speicher. "Or the small dogs will go over there if I have a bunch of big dogs that might run 'em over or hurt them."

There are 10 kennels in the

Pets continues on 13

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Lisa Wood, an employee of All About Flowers in St. Johnsbury, selects flowers for an arrangement.

All About Flowers: 20 Years Of Joy In St. Johnsbury

Founder Lallie Mambourg Still Helps Out on Holidays

BY AMY ASH NIXON
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — All About Flowers has been a happy, hopeful fixture near the top of the hill on Eastern Avenue for the past 20 years.

The business was originally named Lallie's Secret Garden, begun by Lallie Mambourg, who still can be found in the shop on holidays, including Valentine's Day, helping out, said manager Jessie Toney. Toney has been with the business since she asked for part-time work, while studying floriculture at a college in New York state in the summer of 2001. The shop has been owned the past 10 years by Marc and Diane LaRose, though Diane is hands-off, running a second family business right next door in the building the couple owns, Armstrong's Better Hearing Service.

Lallie received a cancer diagnosis the year she began the flower shop, said Toney, "It made her think about what she was doing and what she wanted to be doing. Her husband knew she loved flowers and suggested opening a flower shop."

"Lallie's mom had been a house cleaner and she always left small arrangements of flowers for her clients," explained Toney. "Lallie would help arrange the flowers. They developed a reputation in the community and started doing some small events."

Toney said, "She opened Lallie's Secret Garden in 1998 and had it for three years. Then Vivi Begin became her partner for three years. After that Sandy Lazerick partnered with her until Marc and Diane purchased it."

The name was changed to All About Flowers when Begin joined the business, a few years after the flower shop had been opened.



All About Flowers manager Jessie Toney poses with shop co-owner Mark LaRose, in front of the flower case on a recent day. The shop was begun in 1998 and is celebrating its 20th year in business this year.

A career firefighter who retired a few years ago, Marc LaRose said he was looking for something to keep him busy after he retired, and when the flower shop went on the market and stayed on the market for awhile, he was concerned it may not survive. He didn't want to see it fade into history.

Since he was looking for a business, LaRose said he decided it may be a good one to get into. The staff had been there a long time and the business was

doing well, so he and his wife bought it. But she told him this was his baby, she was busy with the hearing business next door.

The LaRoses have been restoring the more than century-old Lambert Packard-designed brick building for several years, going so far as to return the front windows to nearly floor length, making the front display space eye-catching and creating a warmer shop and work space for the employees.

Marc LaRose said when he talked to the staff about his idea to buy the business, "They convinced me to buy it and let them run it for me!" He said he didn't know a lot about flowers 10 years ago, but today he does. It wasn't the business he thought he'd end up running in retirement, but he's

happy he does.

LaRose said of the original owner, "We still get Lallie in here."

"There's something about her laugh!" added Toney, saying it still fills the shop when she returns to help out on the busy holidays.

The building the shop is in was built in 1896 and was originally built for the Knights of Pythias, said LaRose. He and his wife live in an apartment on the upper floor of the restored building.

The cooler in the front of the shop is overflowing with a choice of many exotic, fresh blooms, and the floral arrangers on staff can create a custom bouquet or arrangement to order.

The shop is committed to supporting local artisans and feature products made and grown in Vermont, including wine, chocolate, flowers and plants. Workshops and events, such as wine and beer tastings are offered to the community, as well.

"We try to put a unique twist on an arrangement," said Toney. The business does flowers for special occasions from weddings to funerals and everything in-between. "We put the extra care into everything, from our arrangements to hand-tied bouquets."

The shop's motto is "Elegantly Vermont."

Pets

Continued from Page 12

main building, each with indoor and outdoor quarters.

She also takes cats and other animals as guests. The cats have their own separate room with a window and perch to look out of. In the summer, the pets can relax in the air-conditioning. In the winter they are warmed with the radiant heat.

Pets are fed at 7 a.m., then they are in and out all morning. By noon they are put into their individual kennels for some down time and fed again at 4 p.m. They are let out for their last run of the day at 7 p.m.

"It's not just a kennel," said Speicher. "It's a camp." Speicher is the head counselor specializing in love and care.

"I give em treats all the time and they get to go outside and play," said Speicher. "I'm out there with them. I'm hands on. I do it by myself so I know each of the personalities of these dogs. A lot one them come back and I know exactly what they like and what their health problems



The entrance to the North Danville Pet Hotel in Danville.

area. So I do get to know them personally."

In addition to taking a variety of different pets as guests, Speicher also grooms pets during their stay. Pets staying at the pet hotel can get a bath, a shave and their toes clipped.

The pet hotel provides food, treats and blankets. Guests bring their own special food and treats and any other special bedding or toys. Speicher also offers de-skunking service.

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The Boudreau family in 2013.

20 Seasons Of ‘Cornfusion’ In Danville

BY DANA GRAY
Staff Writer

NORTH DANVILLE — As far businesses go, The Great Vermont Corn Maze, which turns 20 this year, is a lost cause.

But that’s the point. If visitors didn’t get lost a few times while navigating the numerous “corn-fusing” pathways of the maze, it wouldn’t be challenging enough to sustain its two-decade status as a recreation destination found in the farmlands of North Danville.

Mike and Dayna Boudreau are the co-owners of the attraction, operating the largest maze in New England.

“After some research we actually believe it may be the largest on the East coast but we are confident about being the largest in New England,” Mike said. “We not only have the largest in size but, according to our mazers who visit from all over the world, we have one of the most complex and challenging mazes.”

Making an a-maze-ing attraction

The Boudreaus start planning the maze each January. The design is chosen and a conversation begins about things to be added at the attraction. Planning for the DEAD NORTH haunted event also commences.

“Once the snow is gone we start building as much as we can in DEAD NORTH and whatever we add to the maze or our play area, PRETENDIN,” the Boudreaus stated.

The corn is planted at the end of May.

“While waiting for the corn to sprout we are straight out with maintenance and building and we move stuff into the cornfield like our bridges, boat and other photo ops.”

They start picking the maze the beginning weeks of June. It’s “sun up to sun down” work in the field trying to pick the entire maze before the corn is knee high, the Boudreaus noted. The maze is picked and the trails are tilled and packed to make walking easier.

The preparation of the maze continues ahead of an Aug. 1 opening date.

Once open for the season, it takes about two hours each morning to open the maze including cleaning, restocking, caring for the animals, etc. The maze is open each day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At night the Boudreaus work on the DEAD NORTH attraction.

“We do this 7 days a week until we close mid-October,” the Boudreaus stated.

“We usually sleep in December. Then we work as physical therapists assistants in the winter to support the maze.”

The family that maze together stays together

Mike, 51, and Dayna, 44, have two children who have grown up with the business, working alongside their parents.

The Boudreaus’ son, Jake, was still a baby when the maze venture began. He’s now 21 and will graduate from The University of Vermont this spring. He is planning to raise Lowline Angus grass fed beef on the farm and will continue being a “bridge guy,” helping mazers in the maze.

Rian, now 19, hadn’t been born when the Great Vermont Corn Maze opened. She is now in college preparing to be a physical therapist like her parents.

Another year, another design

When the Boudreaus create their



The 2014 design of the Vermont Corn Maze

20th maze this year, it will be their 20th different design. No maze over the last two decades has resembled any of the others.

The Boudreau family looks to Mike each year to come up with the theme of the maze. He proposes some ideas and the family gets together to make the selection. Once the theme is decided Mike designs the maze. The family offers input about how it should flow.

“Jake has spent the second most time in the corn helping lost people (second to Mike) so he has good feedback on how certain flows worked or didn’t work,” the Boudreaus said.

More than a maze

In addition to the main attraction maze, there is a smaller scenic maze which is usually about a 40-minute walk, according to Mike. Adding to the attraction is the PRETENDIN play area for children, which is designed to be a fun reward for little kids after a day of mazing. It includes a kid-size western village, 100 feet of underground tunnels, a rubber climbing silo, a hay barn, petting zoo, and HIDENSEEK Forest.

Corn Crop Creations Over The Years

1999: shapes- squares and circles
2000: the word Vermont
2001: the vermont quarter
2002: the statue of liberty
2003: our maze logo
2004: our world’s first Barnyard Golf logo
2005: an Indian head
2006: a catamount
2007: Atlas holding the world
2008: Mice looking for cheese
2009: Champ the lake monster eating an actual 28-foot boat
2010: a hiker on the Long Trail
2011: a falcon
2012: a puzzle. life-size jigsaw puzzle pieces
2013: aliens
2014: dinosaurs
2015: gorillas
2016: a Minotaur (the Greek mythological creature that lived in a maze)
2017: black bears in a tree
2018: ????

Happily stuck in the maze business

“It’s exhausting but it is a such a rush to see an idea come together,” the Boudreaus said. “Whether it’s the laughter of little kids in our PRETENDIN play area, the excitement and bonding of families or couples solving the maze after 2½ hours of effort, or hearing the con-

stant screams of people enjoying DEAD NORTH.”

Dayna said she enjoys visiting with returning mazers and the ability to have worked with and spent time with the Boudreau’s children.

“The worst part is that we have picked a business that has to be built from the ground up every year,” they said. “And we have created such a unique attraction that it is very difficult getting new visitors to understand exactly what we are offering and why they should arrive before noon and in August or September.”

20th anniversary plans

“Currently I have a million ideas falling out of my brain and we are making plans for our 20th year,” said Mike. He said there are specific plans to enhance the DEAD NORTH experience. “We will also be doing new stuff, as always, at the maze and PRETENDIN,” he said.

As the Boudreaus reflect on a past that gets them to their 20th anniversary this year, they have no plans to end their adventure in the future.

“We have such a great fan following and so many of our mazers have become like family that we see once a year, we just cannot imagine not opening the maze Aug. 1st,” they said. “As exhausting as the whole thing is, it is part of our lives.”

“Most of our hardcore mazers (people who do not want clues until they have tried for about 2 hours) are great fun to visit with and we look forward to seeing them every year. After 20 years we are now seeing third generation mazers.”

Some direction before wandering off

The experience of running the Great Vermont Corn Maze for so long has given the Boudreaus good insights for people to remember before stepping into their maze.

The maze is not good for large groups or corporate outings, they said, because in those cases “it’s just too many chefs in the kitchen.”

Thousands of decisions have to be made to solve the maze.

Also, it’s not a good idea for one couple or group to have varying fitness levels since some may tire easily while others in the same group might get bored at walking too slowly.

“Good mazers are people who can laugh at themselves, are easy going, like to hike, like challenges and don’t have a melt-down when frustrated,” they said.

For more information about the Great Vermont Corn Maze, including directions, visit online at www.vermontcornmaze.com.

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City Cinema owners Erik Lawson and Karen Robinson at the redesigned concession counter.

City Cinema Continues History Of Screening Movies In Newport City

Owners Share Love Of Movies, Movie Theaters

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

NEWPORT CITY — Showing movies gets in your blood.

Just ask Karen Robinson. She was assistant manager of the former Merrill's cinema in Waterfront Plaza when she was 17 years old.

She went on to work as a paralegal for many years, but when the opportunity to run the cinema, then called Waterfront Cinema, came up again three years ago, Robinson jumped at the chance.

The cinema has been in operation nearly continuously since the 1980s, first as Merrill's, then under Hoyts, as Cinema 1,2,3 and then Waterfront Plaza.

The plaza and building owner Tony Pomerleau decided to shut it down in 2014, after the business had declined and was in disrepair under the previous owner.

Pomerleau was open to seeing the cinema continue, having a feeling that the community would support it if it was renovated and run well, and put out a request for proposals.

Robinson and her partner in life and business Erik Lawson, who ran Village Pizza in Derby and now in Orleans, contacted Pomerleau in September 2014. He said no at first, Robinson said, but in the end agreed to their proposal.

Pomerleau did all the renovations, from floors to walls and ceilings and bathrooms, especially the bathrooms, Lawson said.

He did it to their design, includ-

ing the distinctive wood paneling, Robinson said.

They paid for all the equipment upgrades, an expensive proposition to change over to a digital movie operation that was required throughout the industry.

The doors opened Sept. 4, 2015. Part of the antique reel system they took out is now incorporated into a sculpture that stands in the lobby, created by Cory Spaulding of Auto Outfitters. He also did the outdoor signs.

Robinson combed the Internet for the right seats for the cinema, theater quality seating that allows the viewer to sit back and relax with a cup holder and plenty of leg room. Children need booster seats available at the cinema.

It's a far cry from the broken, crowded seating from the past.

The new equipment for picture, lighting and surround sound are connected digitally, enhancing the movie experience.

The digital process allows the pair to show local advertising as well.

The movie business is seasonal, doing great during the summer when youngsters are out of school, and can be challenging in winter after the holiday season is past.

Some seasons are awesome, they said.

The summer of 2016 was "incredible," Robinson said.

It was a kids' summer, with Finding Dory and other popular movies. But the summer of 2017 was slow nationally, she said.

September is often slow as well, when the students go back to school, they said.

Studios target the holidays beginning with Thanksgiving with big releases, like the recently shown Star Wars offering. The

Last Jedi.

That was popular, but Jumanji kept selling beyond expectations, they said.

Some people love movies so much they keep coming back, Robinson said. One woman saw "Bad Moms" six or seven times, she laughed.

And then there's the Fifties Shades of Gray series, which drew a lot of women in their 40s and 50s.

"They knocked over a display in a rush to get in," Robinson said.

It's a family affair, with her mom often working on the week-ends with their twin sons, who are in high school. "Mom does a lot of cleaning," Robinson said.

There are three regular part-time employees and another couple who come in for some shifts as well.

The cinema business is tied to the concession stand. The studios take 60 percent of the ticket sales and there's a 6 cent sales tax.

The food and drink is what keeps the cinema open, Lawson said. That's why they urge their patrons to not bring in food but buy in-house to keep the cinema going.

They cater to special showings. They open for special school matinees. She estimates that every school in the county sent students to see Wonder.

And Community National Bank's Community Circle enjoys a special morning showing with coffee and donuts from the bank. Some groups will see special shows, like Ben Hur, Some Like It Hot or other classics.

And they draw customers from across the Northeast Kingdom and southern Quebec, where English movie theaters are harder to find.



Students and staff gather on the steps of the East Burke School, which is now celebrating 15 years.

East Burke School Celebrates 15 Years

Non-profit And Independent, East Burke Offers Small-School Opportunities

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

EAST BURKE — East Burke Village is home to a small but

vibrant independent high school celebrating 15 years of education.

East Burke School grew in a county full of independent high schools, from St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute to Burke Mountain Academy. Founded in 2003, it is located in a former graded school building behind Cafe Lotci in the village.

It's small, with never more than 20 students. This year, at 15, is perfect, says Brandon Mazur, one of the two teachers at East Burke School.

It's a non-profit independent school for grades 8 to 12. The mission "is to embrace learning as a natural process of human growth by teaching the critical skills that will prepare students to be innovative, creative, and responsible in our global community."

"We are looking for passionate or curious students" who will excel in a unique learning environment, Mazur said.

Mazur teaches the humanities while fellow teacher Charlie

East Burke continues on 16

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Celebrating 5 Years: Libbey's Meat Market Finds Niche And Success In Northeast Kingdom

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

Libbey's Meat Market opened five years ago with a mission: To bring its customers the best cuts of meat. Period.

They don't have the same customer volume as the supermarkets, and that's fine with them. Libbey's has developed a loyal following and a reputation for the area's finest beef, lamb, chicken, pork and more.

As far as owner Jim Libbey is concerned, it's about quality, not quantity.

"When I was a chef, one of my trademarks was, I always wanted to work with the best products and put out the best food I could," Libbey said. "Now I'm transferring that to my meat business."

Located in a former snack bar on Route 114 in Lyndonville, Libbey's is a hidden jewel for foodies – and those simply seeking good food – in the Northeast Kingdom. Everything they sell is fresh, free of preservatives and antibiotics, and cut to order.

Among their most popular products are a line of marinated meats (chicken breast, tenders and wings, steak tips, pork tips, and more) and fresh made sausage (20 different varieties, chicken, turkey, pork and beef).

For those worried about breaking the bank, think again. Libbey's has something to offer every household, regardless of budget. Yes, they sell filet mignon, but they also offer package deals, allowing people to fill their freezer and save a few bucks.

After 30 years of working and living in Vermont, Libbey (whose family dates back to the 1800s in Lyndonville) understands the economics of the NEK.

"Some people get the impression that because we do offer high quality products, that everything in the store is expensive," Libbey said. "But you can get a \$20 a pound piece of meat or a \$2 a pound pork chop. We try to offer the whole range. We're not just high-end caviar and scallops, but everything we put out

there, even the lesser cuts, are the best we can find." And it's not just the product. Libbey's prides itself on superior customer service.

Not sure what you want? Just ask. Want to plan an event? They can help. Looking for a recipe? Come on in.

"We go the extra step, not just offering you your meat, but we can give you ideas on how to properly cook that," Libbey said.

A self-described "Army brat," Libbey was born in Germany and spent his formative years in the greater Boston area. He was introduced to the food industry through his grandmother's restaurant, The Menu, located in an industrial park in Woburn, Mass.

"I washed dishes there as a teenager, then I started cooking, because one Wednesday night one of the cooks didn't show up and they were shorthanded. They put me on the line," he said. "My grandmother wanted me to be a lawyer, not a cook, but I hopped in and had a knack for it. The next thing, they scheduled me for shifts. I learned from guys who did it forever."

That was the beginning. He continued his education at Boston area hotels, and then Vermont inns and restaurants, working under experienced chefs and taking classes through the Culinary Institute of America.

Before opening the meat market, he spent 14 years at St. Johnsbury Academy, where he ran the culinary arts department with his wife, Sue (they met working together at the restaurant, The Border, in Derby). He ran the culinary side; Sue taught restaurant management.

When an injury sidelined him, Libbey exited the school and began planning for the meat market with consultation from cousin Ronnie Cerra (who owns a meat market in Massachusetts) and Bob Egizi (the longtime owner of R&J Meat Center in St. Johnsbury). He also relied on advice and support from Sue, who remains with the Academy.

"She is influential in every aspect of the business," he said.

Libbey's Meat Market opened in 2013 with one display case, a few employees and modest expectations. Today they have four display cases, six employees, with over 100 customers per day during the busiest months.

They supply four local restaurants (The Foggy Goggle, Burke Publick House, and Bailiwick's locations in St. Johnsbury and Littleton, N.H.) and have doubled their in-store selection, branching out to include fresh, made from scratch soups and soup stocks.

In other words, they've been busy.

On a recent Tuesday morning, Libbey and four meat cutters were settling in for the week. They be-



PHOTOS BY PAUL HAYES

ABOVE: Owner Jim Libbey, right, stands in the cutting room at Libbey's Meat Market while Corey Gadapee works in the background. RIGHT: Libbey's Meat Market offers fresh, quality meats.



gan processing a fresh order, which arrived the day before. In a climate controlled room, Corey Gadapee prepared a roast, Justice O'Neal packaged orders, Sue Burger inventoried product, and Egizi readied spice mixes and meat for sausage making.

Libbey was also looking ahead to the next week, when the Super Bowl would boost demand for party foods like Buffalo wings and pulled pork.

"We're working everyday, as hard as we can to keep up," said Libbey.

It's been hectic. But gratifying.

Said Libbey, "I'm so grateful for the way we've been received by the local community, it's completely blown us away."

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Libbey's Meat Market is located in a former snack bar along Route 114 in Lyndonville. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

East Burke

Continued from Page 15

Delaney teaches math and sciences. They rely on community partners to bring in real-life experience and knowledge to the students. Volunteers provide fine arts.

One day they might be learning about the end of the Passumpsic River dam, another day cheese making and all the sciences and the arts that surround the topics.

The school is the opposite of the formula in some schools where everyone is learning the same thing at the same time.

When asked to describe what makes East Burke School unique, Mazur says he tells parents "it's the small setting that really sets us apart."

And the teachers find themselves freed to do more teaching than they had in formal school settings. Students have time set aside to focus on what they are passionate about, and the teachers find that the students are willing to learn all the facets of that topic as a result.

Scheduling is flexible, the whole school can participate in interdisciplinary projects, there is off-campus learning and community service opportunities.

The students will complete



COURTESY PHOTO

Head cheesemaker Blair Johnson of Sweet Rowen Farmstead in East Albany teaches East Burke School students Jamin Williams and Aidan Grassley.

grade 12 with credits required to graduate in math, science, physics, humanities (English, social studies), art, and languages if desired.

There are no grades. Evaluations are composed of in-depth narratives.

The school is governed by a board of directors with Mazur as head of school as well as teach-

er. He calls being school head the unglamorous part involving pay roll and budgets and other aspects of administration.

The tuition is intentionally kept at the average cost to educate a student in Vermont as set by the state, this year at \$15,130, "and not a penny more," Mazur said.

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