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Fairbanks Scales employees Ryan Fox, of Concord, and Justin Royer, of Lyndonville, monitor the company's new industrial laser cutter on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at the St. Johnsbury manufacturing plant. (Photo by Dana Gray)

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**195 YEARS**

## Fairbanks Scales Weighs 195 Years Of Innovation, Community Impact

BY PAUL HAYES  
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — Fairbanks Scales is celebrating its 195th anniversary, marking nearly two centuries of contributions to the local, national, and international markets. Founded in 1830 by Thaddeus Fairbanks, the company became a leader in the weighing industry with the invention of the platform scale.

At its peak in 1912, Fairbanks employed 1,400 people at its facility on the Sleepers River, playing a crucial role in the economic development of St. Johnsbury and surrounding areas. Despite changes in ownership and the need for diversification over the years, the company has maintained a strong presence in the community.

In 1966, concerned citizens launched a fundraising campaign to secure the weighing division's future. This campaign resulted in the construction of a new manufacturing plant at 2176 Portland St., where it continues to operate today. The company expanded its manufacturing capabilities in 1975 with a new plant in Mississippi, which allowed for cost-effective production but also led to a significant reduction in St. Johnsbury's workforce.

Alongside the expansion, Fairbanks moved its corporate headquarters to Kansas City, Missouri in the late 1980s. President and CEO Rick Norden, who has led the company from Kansas City since 1999, emphasizes the importance of product quality and customer satisfaction. "We've been able to stay successful so long by meeting our customers' needs and expectations," Norden said.

Approximately 85 percent of the products assembled in St. Johnsbury are engineered and manufactured at the facility, specializing in sheet metal fabrication, assembly, and quality con-

trol. Norden points out that the St. Johnsbury workforce remains committed and skilled despite the distance from headquarters, with many employees building long-term careers at Fairbanks.

The company actively supports the local community, including the Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce, Catamount Arts, and Relay For Life, honoring the ties it has built with the region over nearly two centuries.

Looking ahead, Fairbanks aims to expand its market share and explore new business opportunities. "The goal is to continue to grow the business and provide opportunities for our employees while keeping our customers first and foremost," Norden said.

Last July's flooding hit the large factory building, but production continued despite the challenges of some of the employees being displaced from the building. Office space toward the street-facing side of the building was gutted, and restoration work continues. Some employees and members of management have been working out of trailers on site. Plant Manager Gabe Stark said the renovation work required due to the flooding should be done by late May or early June.

Today, Fairbanks Scales employs over 500 people nationwide and maintains service centers in 49 states and more than 25 countries. The company is recognized for selling various products, from precision scales to heavy-capacity truck and railroad track scales. Its latest innovation, Intalox Technology, enhances scale accuracy and reliability, reinforcing Fairbanks' commitment to maintaining its position as an industry leader.

As Fairbanks Scales approaches its 200th anniversary, it remains focused on innovation, employee growth, and community engagement, ensuring a strong future ahead.

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Mark Beck, a 35-year employee of Fairbanks Scales in St. Johnsbury, controls the placement of a 5,000-pound block onto a 5,000-pound capacity Fairbanks-built universal platform scale on Thursday, March 27, 2025. (Photo by Dana Gray)

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Employees of Maple Grove Farms in St. Johnsbury gather at the plant on Thursday, March 27, 2025. This year marks 110 years of the business. (Photo by Dana Gray)

**110 YEARS**

**Maple Grove Farms Enjoys 110 Years Of Sweet Success**

BY DANA GRAY  
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — A kitchen is where it all began, and the kitchen is where it can be found 110 years later.

What started in 1915 as maple candy hand-made in Kathleen Ide Gray's kitchen in St. Johnsbury is now Maple Grove Farms, with maple syrup and salad dressings in kitchens nationwide.

Maple Grove Farms of Vermont, a division of B&G Foods, is located on Portland Street on the same property that St. Johnsbury resident George Cary, who came to be known as "The Maple Sugar King" established his Cary Maple Sugar Co.

A story published on Sept. 16, 1950 in The Caledonian-Record about the death of Gray noted details of the candy company's beginning. "This candy business was started in the farmhouse kitchen of 'The Wayside,' the lovely old Gray Homestead on the Passumpsic road ... This home, which was a social center for the community, proved to be the birthplace of the first maple candy industry in this country."

Gray's daughter Helen Gray and her friend, Ethel McLaren, are credited along with Kathleen with being the candy company's "originators," the article notes.

Success meant growth, and a collaboration with the "Maple Sugar King" soon grew.

In January 1920, the Maple Grove Candies Co. was incorporated with the Grays and McLaren, who joined George Cary as initial stockholders.

The Caledonian-Record noted on Jan. 6, 1920, how the maple candy business had grown in only a handful of years. "The business has steadily grown until now six rooms are utilized for manufacturing the candies, and 20 girls are employed. Their trade extends all over the United States, and they supply the best candy stores in the cities with their goods," the story notes.

It was noted in the story that Cary's Portland Street business would be adding new buildings to locate the candy-making business. The business was sold to Cary in 1929.

A Nov. 14, 1929, Caledonian-Record article told of the candy company's new factory on Portland Street. "This building occupies the area directly in front of the Cary factory and the space

beside the Maple Grove Cabin. The outside of this pleasant red brick building is of the best, but the interior has something that is of interest to everyone, young and old included." The story described a tour of the facility and called it a "modern wonderland."

It remains part of the full Maple Grove Farms factory campus, which also includes the Maple Grove Cabin, which serves as the company's museum and gift shop. Here, 55-year Maple Grove employee Phil Ann Jenkins greets visitors and supports customers.

Plant Manager Peter Christopher said among the 70 employees at Maple Grove Farms there are 10 other employees who have been there longer than 25 years.

He said in an email that generations of dedicated workers have given the company its longevity.

"For 110 years, Maple Grove Farms has cultivated a culture of excellence," said Christopher, who has managed the St. Johnsbury facility for six years. "Today, seventy people from the Northeast Kingdom continue this commitment by manufacturing quality food products sold in the United States and Canada ... Maple Grove Farms is an important part of the Northeast Kingdom economy."

B&G Foods acquired the plant in 1998 and, five years later, cut the ribbon on what the newspaper noted as a "state-of-the-art maple syrup filling line," which resulted from a million-dollar investment by the parent company.

Christopher said the company is currently working on packaging line changes to maintain production efficiencies for retail customers. New equipment will be added, he said.

Last summer's flooding brought about an upgrade at the property as a section of the Moose River retaining wall needed to be replaced "thanks in part to a grant from the State of Vermont," Christopher said.

He said Maple Grove Farms faces challenges shared by other companies in the packaged food industry.

"We are challenged by an inflationary cost environment," he said.

Working to meet the challenge means continued "operational efficiencies so that we can continue to provide our loyal consumers with the great-tasting maple syrup and salad dressing products they expect from Maple Grove Farms," Christopher said.



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Old Stone House Museum Associate Director Bob Hunt and Executive Director Krista Barry stand in one of the museum rooms. (Contributed Photo)

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**100 YEARS**  
**Old Stone House Makes History By Honoring It**

BY ERIC SCHAFER  
Staff Writer

BROWNINGTON—Old Stone House Museum and Historic Village has made its legacy experience available to the public for 100 years.

The Orleans County Historical Society opened the Old Stone House Museum in 1925. A large stone structure in a small Northeast Kingdom town, the Old Stone House and Historic Village is significant to Vermont's agricultural and educational history. The museum houses over 75,000 artifacts, cared for by the Museum registrar Darlene Young.

Almost all of the artifacts are attached directly to stories of people and families throughout the history of Orleans county. Folk art paintings, quilts, furniture, toys, tools, medical equipment, all things that paint a history in all aspects of life in the times.

The historical village, which is 60 acres and seven buildings, hosts classes on traditional American crafts, public gardens, and a variety of historically driven events that populate its online seasonal calendar. Standing atop a wind-swept hill, the village breathes with reverence for legacy. Someone unfamiliar with the area might get lost in time.

The Orleans County Historical Society operates the Old Stone House Museum and Historic Village. Incorporated in 1853, it is the second oldest historical society in Vermont. Associate Executive Director Bob Hunt elaborated on an even deeper history.

"The roots of the historical society go back even further to the Orleans County Natural Civil History Society, but that petered out for a while," he said.

Executive Director Krista Barry said, "If you count the years of the Orleans County Natural Civil History Society, we're the oldest, but technically, the Vermont Historical Society incorporated before we did."

Preservation of the area could be due to economic factors and how methods of travel developed around the state. Hunt said, "What made this school important in the early days is it was on the Hinman Settler Road, a stagecoach route between Boston and Montreal," he said.

The emergence of railroads diminished reliance on travel by stagecoach, and then means of travel were pulled further away from Brownington by highways. While other areas of the state developed, the Old Stone House and Historic Village were essentially isolated.

Built in 1836, the Old Stone House was named Athenian Hall by its proprietor, Alexander Twilight.

Alexander Twilight led an exceptional career as a statesman and educator. Most of his history revolves around the Old Stone House. Twilight was also one of

the charters for the original Orleans County Natural Civil History Society.

In 1823, Twilight graduated from Middlebury College. He is believed to be the first African American to earn a baccalaureate from an American college or university. He became a career teacher, an ordained minister, and the first African American state legislator in the United States.

The Old Stone House was built as Twilight's schoolhouse, and the first co-ed dormitory in the United States. Twilight's career inspired many national figures across all disciplines, from railroad tycoons to educational reformists, politicians, and abolitionists; these stories and more can be heard at the Old Stone House Museum and Historical Village.

Visitors can figuratively step into the shoes of a student who attended classes almost 200 years ago and literally step into the dorm rooms once occupied by those same students. Aged glass windows are etched with initials and names of young scholars seeking to make their mark.

In 1855, Twilight suffered a debilitating stroke, and died in 1857. Hunt spoke on the effect of Twilight's death and legacy.

"He had such an influence on his generation of students. In the 1880s, they had alumni gatherings here. Thirty years after Twilight's death students were coming from all over the country to a summer alumni gathering and picnic to remember Twilight at the Old Stone House in his memory," she said.

Barry said, "I hope he would be proud that there is still a legacy of education central to downtown Brownington. The exhibits we put on are all very much focused on that spirit of trying to share, and educate, and teach... Institutions like the Old Stone House Museum are such an interesting real example, like a manifestation of human tenacity to preserve its story."

"An interesting thing about the Old Stone House story that we don't even highlight very much is that in 1917, when the building was bought by the Orleans County Historical Society to become a museum, it was going to be torn down. People wanted to buy it to use all that granite for infrastructure," Barry said.

Hunt said they wanted the granite for railroad bridge abutments.

"It was the railroads that brought about the demise of the school, and then to have the blocks used in railroad bridges would be kind of ironic," he said.

Fortunately, local people put a stop to the effort to dismantle the house.

"They did not want to lose this wonderful old landmark," he said.

Said Barry, "They raised the money totally from grassroots, a group of people got together, raised the funds, and bought that house dollar by dollar. Over the next 100-plus years, every year, dollar by dollar, we continue to raise the funds to keep the door open."

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**75 YEARS**

**NVDA Promotes Kingdom Business Since Its Inception**

BY ANDREW MCGREGOR  
Staff Writer

For 75 years, the Northeastern Vermont Development Association has supported towns and businesses across the Northeast Kingdom. NVDA was formed at the very same meeting where Sen. George Aiken coined the term “Northeast Kingdom” to describe Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties.

Since then NVDA has held a unique position by serving as both the Regional Planning Commission and the Regional Development Corporation - tasks typically done by two different entities elsewhere in the state.

NVDA Executive Director David Snedeker says that the synergy of planning and promotion is an asset for NVDA and the NEK.

As the regional planning commission, NVDA provides services to its member municipalities for land use planning and regulation,


transportation planning, energy planning, emergency management coordination, mapping, and natural resource planning. As a regional development corporation, NVDA helps businesses of all sizes connect with available programs and resources.

NVDA operates on a \$2.5 million budget, which is funded through a mix of federal and state funds, municipal dues and some revenue generated through NVDA's property holdings. NVDA employs 14 people, three of whom handle business and financial operations, and the remainder are the planning staff. Snedeker helps with both the planning and development work.

The predominant part of their work is spent on planning because the bulk of their funding goes to that work through agreements with state agencies like Commerce, Transportation, Emergency Management, Natural Resources, and Building and General Services.

See NVDA, Page B7

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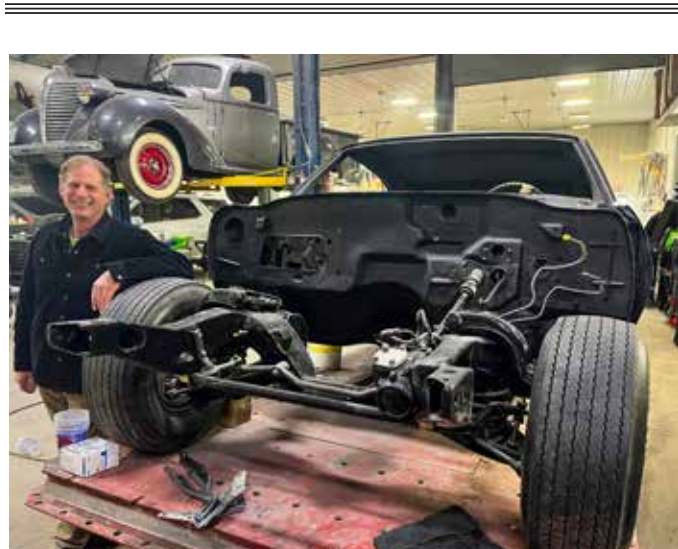
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With a vintage truck on the lift in background, Darling Performance Auto owner Paul Fredella stands by a muscle car undergoing restoration at the Creamery Road garage in Ryegate. (Photo by Stephen Garfield)

**55 YEARS**

**Darling Auto Peeling Out Into Muscle Car Restoration**

BY STEPHEN GARFIELD  
Staff Writer

E. RYEGATE — In business for 55 years as Darling Auto Repair, the business is reinventing itself.

Founders and long-time owners Craig and Cindy Darling sold the business last October to Paul Fredella and the business was renamed Darling Performance Auto, LLC. The Darlings are staying on as employees.

The business is de-emphasizing collision and auto repair and entering restoration, sales and service of classic muscle cars from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

“I’ve known Craig and Cindy for 30 years,” Fredella said. “Craig has always done [muscle care restoration], he always did my car over the years. It’s always been a diverse business, but the concentration has been on collision, repair etc.”

“When Craig got to the point where he wanted to make some [business] decisions,” Fredella added, “I was in a position to be able to come on board and formulate a plan that he thought, we thought, might work strategically.”

Fredella noted that Darling Performance Auto is naturally focused on restoring classic 1967-72-era muscle cars—Chevy Chevelles, Olds 442s, Pontiac Roadrunners, and many others.

“We’d always had these discussions [about classic car restoration],” Fredella noted. “Craig

and I get just as excited today about when we bring back a car we would’ve loved and dreamed about in high school as we would’ve then - here it is, right in front of us!”

“When a customer brings in a 70 Chevelle SS [to restore, that] he used to ride around in with his buddies in high school, we bring back that smell, that feeling the look, everything.”

“For us, it’s our hobby, a passion, and a nostalgic anchor to the past.”

Craig Darling shares in the enthusiasm for the new direction of the business. “Paul was willing to keep our help, keep everyone here who was employed, so we made the decision to roll,” he said in the interview with he, Cindy Darling, Fredella and office manager Mandy Bailey. “We’re in the process of trying to change over from collision & automotive work to just muscle car restoration. We’re hoping that’ll happen in the next few months. It’s something we’ve always wanted to do - it’s a big step.”

The business employs 18. It’s a long way from where Darling’s Auto Repair began 55 years ago at a one-bay, wood stove-heated bay in Groton. “This is the only job I’ve ever had, my whole life,” Craig said. “My parents started the business [in 1970], when I turned 18. I became a partner with my parents, and my wife and I bought them out 20-25 years ago.” The Darlings still have their Groton facility, he added.

See Darling, Page B6

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Jay Craven, founding director of Catamount Arts, addresses a crowd of celebrants on Thursday, June 20, 2024, in the arts center on Eastern Avenue. Current Catamount Arts Director Jody Fried is at right. (Photo by Dana Gray)

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**50 YEARS**

## Catamount Arts Celebrates 50 Years As Cultural, Artistic, Economic Icon

BY ANDREW MCGREGOR  
 Staff Writer

In 1975 Jay Craven and Reg Ainsworth traveled across the Northeast Kingdom to share their passion for cinema, screening classic films like "Citizen Kane" for residents. Now Catamount Arts, the nonprofit born of that effort, continues to spread the arts far and wide as it turns 50 and is looking at its busiest summer yet.

Catamount Arts is involved in an enormous variety of art projects, workshops, performances and more. It has evolved to partner with other similarly minded organizations to provide support and expertise.

Catamount Arts Executive Director Jody Fried has long said the arts are a critical part of a vibrant and growing community. They help attract tourists and new residents to the area and provide another economic driver, like manufacturing, health care, recreation, agriculture and others.

Fried said much of the organization's recent growth was born of an extensive effort to develop a strategic plan for Catamount after he started a little over 15 years ago.

"A lot of the course that we've been set on was based on a fundamental decision to how we could bring the arts out in the community as an extension of what we were doing in the arts center," said Fried.

Catamount now produces or supports arts programming from Newport to Lake Morey and Montpelier to as far as North Conway, said Fried, highlighting the three mobile performance stages they now operate along with the box office ticketing service they provide to partner organizations across that area.

Fried said the region is filled with an amazing ecosystem of artists and art organizations, each with unique strengths and needs. Catamount is trying to position itself to provide administrative capacity to help them in their creative endeavors.

"These organizations in other communities are able to bring forward what the magic is in their own community and we just do whatever we can to help support them," said Fried.

In addition to that, though, Catamount has continued to expand its footprint and programming with plans for a multi-million

dollar redevelopment of several buildings next to its home on Eastern Avenue. Known as the octagon buildings behind the arts center, Catamount, which is also utilizing space in The Caledonian-Record building next door, will expand its creative campus and opportunities in the heart of St. Johnsbury, which Fried sees as the epicenter of their region and work.

Catamount also conducts a plethora of arts education programming through schools and camps, hugely popular performance series like the Levitt Amp concert series at Dog Mountain and downtown St. Johnsbury throughout the summer, and the KCP Presents shows, produced in collaboration with KCP director and Catamount founder Jay Craven, at venues across the region in winter and spring, First Night, and much more.

Fried said Catamount was expecting to help produce over 70 concerts this summer, both its own and in partnership with other groups, which is expected to bring over 75,000 to the region.

"It's pretty incredible when you look at the numbers," said Fried. "Literally five nights a week this summer, people will be able to go to see free live music throughout the region."



Fried said Catamount's efforts to support and bring world-class arts right into the community can have a lasting effect on the area. He noted, for instance, groups like the Houston Ballet perform on the same stage at Lyndon Institute, where local school groups and studios dance.

"The aspirational value of that and how that's incorporated into their life is just so remarkable," said Fried.

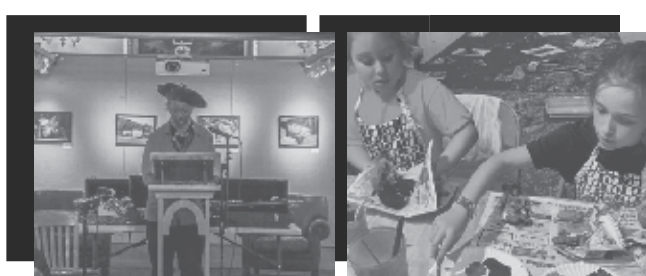
"It's taking place out in the community where people live their everyday lives. And for us as a region here in the Northeast Kingdom, it's an incredible strength and an incredible asset."

Part of the challenge, though, is sustaining the effort. Catamount is not an angel-funded organization, said Fried, ticking off the variety of fundraising efforts and community support they rely on. He said Catamount was, in many ways, a reflection of the overall health of the region. The more successful the region is, the more successful Catamount will be.


"I think we've got a lot of momentum to carry forward for the next 50 years as we celebrate our 50th this year."

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Catamount Arts staff in May, 2024, from left, Derek Campbell, Ashli Roberts, Molly Stone, Ashley Van Zandt, Martin Bryan and Director Jody Fried. (File photo)

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In 2025, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services celebrates half a century in the North Country. Here in Littleton, in August 2024, are staff members of ACHS and representatives for New Hampshire's federal delegation celebrating ACHS's 30th anniversary as a federally qualified health center. (File photo)

**50 YEARS**

## ACHS Celebrates 5 Decades Of Community Health

BY ROBERT BLECHL  
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — In 2025, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services celebrates half a century in the North Country.

Founded in 1975 by Dr. Jennifer Lewis and under the direction of Norrine Williams, ACHS met a need to provide quality healthcare services in a rural area.

It began that year with two employees and a \$12,000 budget.

Today, ACHS has a budget of \$12 million, some 100 staff members, five locations in Littleton, Franconia, Whitefield, Woodsville, and Warren, and serves 10,000 residents, equating to one in three residents across 26 towns.

In 2024, ACHS celebrated 30 years as a federally qualified health center.

As of 2024, it ranked in the top 16 of the 1,400 FQHCs nationwide for cancer prevention, having been awarded the National Quality Leading Cancer Screening Badge.

Programs have expanded through the years, including integrating behavioral health in 1998.

Ed Shanshala, who has been CEO of ACHS for the last twenty of its fifty years, calls it “the people’s health center.”

He spoke of future plans and programs and how it feels to lead an organization that has grown exponentially to provide critical services to local residents.

“ACHS has achieved national goals in diabetes and depression since 2009, was number two in the country for colorectal cancer screening beginning in 2018 and is in the top 16 for overall cancer screening starting in 2023,” he said. “So how to work with the community to co-create optimal individual health and community outcomes was a question I raised starting in 2018 with the rise of the opioid epidemic. The answer I arrived at was categorically to ‘take it to the people.’”

If ACHS is the “people’s health center,” and it is, then where our friends, families, and neighbors live is the “people’s community,” said Shanshala.

“We need to get out beyond our care delivery sites and work ‘with’ rather than ‘to’ or ‘at’ our fellow community members,” he said. “To that end, we launched a K-12

school-based behavioral health/substance use disorder prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and recovery service line. Since then, we have addressed an HRSA-funded [Health Resources and Services Administration] early childhood development that brings human and tangible resources to children and their families, a HRSA Northern Borders grant-funded Food as Medicine Teaching Kitchen as well as a developing Request and Offers Trust and logistics platform to address transportation and will be bringing the New Hampshire State Health Improvement Plan out into our communities to learn more about what is possible when we align our efforts neighbor to neighbor.”

Shanshala said that all of those community-based programs will be integrated with other programs through the ACHS-Resilient American Community framework to avoid duplication of effort or gaps.

“The ACHS-RAC is focused on hyper-local communities of trust who we engage to co-create solutions to some of the challenges they face, such as food security, housing challenges, aging and loneliness,” he said. “A significant part of this work is identifying community assets that can be searched from one web location. We do many needs assessments, we can do better at identification of resources and assets in our own communities. Our vision is reinvigorating the libraries in our communities to libraries of all things health and wellness.”

He spoke of the ACHS vision, which includes being the place not only where people want to get care, but where people want to work.

“I imagined a future employee waiting list for when openings became available,” said Shanshala. “We are not quite there, yet we are close. We have people who have spent their career at ACHS in various roles, we have had people who have left to become CEOs of nearby hospitals, we have people who have left and come back, and all in all we have and continue to co-curate a culture of community that is compassionate and caring for all who chose to work at ACHS and all who choose to get their care here regardless of the challenges and barriers they may face in their personal life journeys.”

## Darling

Continued from Page B4

While the Darlings are now ‘employees’ at the business, “it’s more a partnership,” Fredella emphasized. “Everything that happens here is a team decision.

“We are a full-service company within muscle car restoration - and,” he added, “we’ll always urge a customer to stay with the original color of the car.”

That in itself is a detailed aspect of the business, Craig remarked. “The average car being completely painted will be a minimum 8-10G just to get started in paint material: liquids, base coats, clear coats, primers, hardeners, activators. You’re selling labor, parts and material.” At the same time, “it’s not worth putting \$10,000 into a Corvair, so

we’ll try to send that customer the right way,” he emphasized. “So it’s a different playing field, but it’ll be a welcome change.”

### Annual Car Show

The second weekend in August is well-known as the time of the annual auto show hosted by the Darlings and their employees. It’s something they and Fredella touched on as an important function every year in town.

“We’ve had it 17 years,” Craig noted. “Four to 500 people show up, we feed them, our help cooks all nite - we have a burnout contest out front - a few vendors show up, but it’s mostly our guys.” The event, Fredella added, speaks to the community-minded end of the business. “A lot of what myself, Craig and Cindy stand for is building community,” he said.

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**50 YEARS**  
**Next Generation Leads Anthony's Diner Through 50th Anniversary**

BY ERIC SCHAFER  
Staff Writer



ST. JOHNSBURY—Anthony's Diner's otherwise celebratory 50th anniversary year was made somewhat somber in October with the passing of beloved founder and owner Anthony "Tony" Proia.

Tony's daughter, Danielle Gray, now runs the Railroad Street restaurant alongside her friend Kristen Croteau, who serves as manager. Croteau has worked at Anthony's for 24 years, starting when she was 15.

Danielle has been working at the Diner since 2001 and says her greatest challenge yet is stepping into her father's role. "He was amazing, everyone loved him. People came in here to see him. He loved the community, he loved the customers, he loved his employees," Danielle said.

Tony moved to St. Johnsbury from East Hartford, Connecticut and opened Anthony's Diner in 1975. The diner had been open for six months when he hired Judith Anderson as a waitress. Two years later, they married and remained married until Tony's passing 48 years later.

Judith spoke of her late husband's love for the community. "He loved people, he loved the customers, he loved sitting at the counter, chatting, talking. He was always helpful to people," she said. "He would give people a job. He'd give people money. He'd give people food. He was very generous. It was just in his nature."

Judith and Tony faced their toughest challenge when a fire destroyed the diner in 1993, but in 1995, Anthony's Diner reopened and stands today.

Judith said that handing off the business was a gradual process that began a few years ago. As Tony began working less, Danielle began learning and working more.

"I was kinda learning it the last couple years," Danielle said.

Croteau added, "You (Danielle) stepped in, when he (Tony)

Founder Anthony Proia. (Courtesy) stepped down. He would still come in and make doughnuts as often as he could."

Despite the loss of the restaurant's namesake, Anthony's Diner remains very much the same as it was. A step into the diner can take a customer back decades. Earthy colors and lacquered wood dominate the dining room, while a chalkboard offers daily specials and a selection of pies.

The downtown eatery remains modeled after a time of bar-sitting and socialization over coffee and home fries. The bar-stools are large and comfortable, and the bar itself is long and wide with ample legroom. A laminated counter-top wraps around an island from which Croteau and the waitstaff can dispense coffee, napkins, and gossip from a social center. Those in a more private party can sit at a line of two-person booths tucked along an inner wall, behind which Danielle works the kitchen. A family can fit in the larger, high-backed booths along windows overlooking Railroad Street.

Danielle and Croteau aren't planning significant changes.

"This is a staple place. The Diner has been here forever, and we try to keep it the same so everybody feels welcome," Croteau said.

Danielle said, "The menu has not changed... We use local foods and resources when possible."

Judith said there's a solid foundation to carry Anthony's into the future.

"We have such a strong foundation," she said. "Our daughter's been with us quite a few years. It's (Anthony's Diner) gonna continue through the people that are there."

**NVDA**

Continued from Page B4

NVDA is responsible for regional planning and represents 48 member towns, one city and a municipality comprising six unified towns and gores. The Northeast Kingdom is 2,027 square miles, just over one-fifth of the State of Vermont. A contract with the Agency of Commerce supports the business development work.

NVDA owns the Charles Carter Business Center in the St. Johnsbury - Lyndon Industrial Park, most of the undeveloped land in the St. J -Lyndon Park, and the Hardwick Industrial Park. It just closed on the remaining land in the industrial park in Orleans. NVDA also operates two revolving loan funds, one for small businesses and another for brownfield cleanup. NVDA can also serve as an interim land owner to assist businesses if needed.

The niche that NVDA serves is an integral one for the region.

"I think that over the years, and especially recently, there is a recognition by state agencies and the Legislature that RPCs are a perfect interface between state and local governments," said Snedeker, who noted the work they did to assist communities through the pandemic and administering the influx of state and federal funds. He said regional planning commissions, like NVDA, are very experienced in administering state and federal funds.

"I expect a continued reliance on RPCs to help their communities, especially in our more rural commu-

nities who don't have professional staff," said Snedeker. "My sense is that in the coming years we will be assisting with the coordination of providing shared services for such things as Zoning Administrators, regional emergency services, etc."

Snedeker noted the NEK is a beautiful region with abundant natural resources and a resourceful and resilient people. "Our greatest need, though, is that we need more people to live and work in our region as our population is aging and stagnant, declining," he said. A growing population is important for businesses, institutions and communities and requires more housing.

Snedeker cited several accomplishments NVDA assisted with in recent years as having a big impact on the region, including the Charles Carter Business Center, which provides a space for businesses to grow; the Vermont Food Venture Center in Hardwick, which supports food-based businesses; and most recently, the Yellow Barn Business Accelerator project in Hardwick, which supports Cabot Creamery, Jasper Hill Farm and the Center for an Agricultural Economy. Snedeker noted that other projects can also have a big impact on villages, like the Albany General Store and Barnie's Market in Concord.

"Projects like these are extremely important to our small rural villages as they really breathe life into those communities," said Snedeker. "For all of these that I've mentioned, the keys to the success of the projects is our ability to bring our RPC and RDC services together for maximum benefit."

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Trenny Robb and Bob Michaud in the High Beams show room in 2015.

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**45 YEARS**

## High Beams Lights Up The Region For 45 Years

BY PAUL HAYES  
Staff Writer

SUTTON—High Beams, a lighting fixture shop co-founded by Trenny Robb and Bob Michaud, is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year. Since opening in 1980, the couple has witnessed numerous lighting styles come and go, many of which have returned.

“We started out making lights out of junk,” Robb said. “We’ve come almost full circle,” she added, noting that today’s customers, particularly younger men, are drawn to vintage styles, like Edison lights, with clean lines and eye-catching designs.

Robb and Michaud relocated to Sutton and launched High Beams, choosing lighting over window treatments as their specialty. “We created this business and taught ourselves everything. It grew out of survival,” Robb explained.

The couple’s craftsmanship is reflected in their one-of-a-kind pieces, including hammered brass and metal fixtures, standing lamps, chandeliers, floor lamps, and wall sconces. They also design bathroom and outdoor lighting and specialty art pieces. Customers can request individual light fixtures or full-house designs.

The couple continues to thrive despite facing challenges in sourcing parts and frames due to many suppliers going out of business. “After 45 years, we can make a

lot of those parts and frames ourselves, but it makes it harder and more complicated,” Robb said. “We have no idea when we might retire, so until then, we’re still at it.”

High Beams is currently working by appointment only due to their involvement in various projects and deliveries. While the couple stopped doing shows during the COVID-19 pandemic, their lamps remain available at the Northeast Kingdom Artisan Guild in St. Johnsbury, Millers Thumb in Greensboro, and Collective: The Art of Craft in Woodstock.

Robb emphasized the creativity involved in their work, stating, “We make lights out of anything.” They often communicate with customers via their website, discussing ideas and designs online until a final piece is completed and delivered. “Many customers have ideas, photographs, or drawings about what they want,” Robb noted.

One of their most notable projects was a seven-foot chandelier for Foxy’s, a bar in the British Virgin Islands. This custom piece was designed to be easily assembled and able to be raised and lowered quickly, a necessity during hurricane season.

As they reflect on their 45 years in business, both Robb and Michaud continue to embrace the creative process, saying, “We don’t hurry to work like we used to, but we’re still doing it all.”

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**35 YEARS**

## Morrill & Guyer Serve Real Estate Needs For 35 Years

BY AMY ASH NIXON  
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Annie Guyer has been a reliable, knowledgeable expert in the local real estate field for decades, having embarked on a part-time career as a real estate agent when she was a young mom raising her family.

“I’ve had my real estate license since 1983 when I started working for Hill & Valley Real Estate, with Patty Emery,” Guyer recalled on her early days in the business.

She worked as a real estate agent for a number of years before becoming a real estate appraiser. She’s provided both services for more than two decades now for customers looking to buy real estate in the Northeast Kingdom, of which she is a native.

Today, Guyer is the sole proprietor of two businesses operating under one corporate umbrella, Morrill & Guyer Ltd.

Beneath that corporate name, two distinct branches of her businesses operate: AKG Appraisals (formerly Reynolds Real Estate Appraisal



Annie Kempton Guyer.

(Services) and Morrill & Guyer Associates, the real estate company.

Guyer also owns and operates NEK Cycling (<https://www.nekcyclingstudio.com/>) in the same building where her property services companies are located. It is a busy indoor spinning studio with certified instructors.

All three companies are located at 791 Broad St., Lyndonville.

This year, the original business that Guyer bought with her former business partner, Don Morrill, marks 35 years in business.

Guyer met Morrill when they

See Guyer, Page B12

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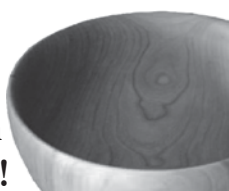


Marty Beattie and Lyndsay Beattie, showing plans for another major expansion, planned this year. (Photo by Amy Ash Nixon)

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**35 YEARS**  
**Marty's First Stop Celebrates Continual Growth Over 35 Years**

BY AMY ASH NIXON  
Staff Writer

DANVILLE — On Feb. 19, Marty's First Stop celebrated its 35th birthday.

Marty's First Stop remains owned by its founder, Martin "Marty" Beattie, his wife, Catherine, and the second-generation owners who have been learning the business and taking more of the reins the past few years: the Beatties' son, James, and his wife and their daughter-in-law, Lyndsay Beattie.

The family is three years into the transition to the second-generation owners of the local market.

The Feb. 19 anniversary celebration - held on the date Marty's first opened for business in 1990 - was an appreciation for customers, employees and vendors, said Lyndsay and Marty. Without their loyal shoppers, hardworking crew of about 40 folks (it increases to about 50 in the summer months) and their vendors, Marty's couldn't be the success story that it is today, they said.

Fans of Marty's chimed in to post congratulations on the anniversary.

"Thank you for making our beautiful community even brighter!" Cathy Dellinger of Danville wrote.

Louise Lessard said, "You are so valuable to our community. It would be a hardship if not for Marty's 1st Stop. Thanks to each and everyone who keeps you going."

Laurie Pollard agreed, "Danville is so lucky that you followed through on your vision."

Jeannie Blake wrote, "Thank you for letting me be part of your team!!!"

Customers called out their favorite features of the store and departments, from having the "coldest beer in town" to compliments for the store's meat department and more.

Staff and the store's founders and current owners were commended for working so hard for so long to provide a community market that has grown to serve the needs of the area.

**Early Days**

Martin "Marty" Beattie founded the store, converting a former garage business into a small community market on busy Route 2. He said he knew there was an appetite for a store in the area and watched all the cars passing by the property.

At the time he was with the E. T. & H. K. Ide grain company of St. Johnsbury, working with local farmers and supplying their grain needs. He could see the writing on the wall as a dwindling number of farms were on his route. He said he needed a change of employment to something stable that would make a career for him after 15 years working with Ide.

"We were losing farmers all the time," he recalled. "I said, 'I better do something for myself.'"

Marty bought the property in 1989 to develop a store out of the abandoned garage.

That vision came into reality on Feb. 19, 1990.

When asked about the name choice, Marty's First Stop, Marty said he figured no matter what he called the store, because he was the

owner, people would end up calling it "Marty's." It seemed like it was the first stop outside of St. Johnsbury, so that's how he came up with the name. One day, the store could have a different name to more accurately reflect its role as a grocery market, he said. That will be up to James and Lyndsay.

Marty said there have been several major additions over the years, including the Union Bank branch in 1997, 2004, and 2008. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the branch was closed, and the space became additional floor space for the retail store.

Marty initially planned to redevelop the property and create a successful small community market that he could sell to a new owner in roughly five years.

That never happened, and he and his family have remained in the business, growing it by leaps and bounds and with plans to more than double Marty's footprint.

"I'm still here, now I don't know any better," Marty said with a smile.

The store is about 9,000 square feet and plans this year call for a 10,000-square-foot addition. The new space will be built at the back of the current building, and with the exception of a few days when it may have to close for electrical work and other site needs, the market will remain open throughout the construction timeframe, said Marty.

He's very happy that the business will stay in the family.

"It's a good business, and I'd like to see it go on," he said. The ownership structure is now that there are four corporate officers of Marty's, the two couples.

The store needs a makeover from new registers (including plans for two backup self-checkout registers, but owners say they want to rely on cashiers mainly), wider aisles, and other equipment updates to modernize and make the layout more efficient for employees and customers.

"We're too big to be small and too small to be big," said Marty of their in-between market size.

By more than doubling their footprint, they will be more competitive with the larger markets and will be able to have larger grocery carts and step up their game in the hopes that more customers will see Marty's as the place where they choose to do all their grocery shopping.

The family is connected to several local farms and will be carrying McDonald Farm milk from James' and Lyndsay's farm in Danville just up the road from Marty's, as well as an expanded line of local produce grown locally by James' cousin Jacob Mills.

A new meat department is part of the expansion plans, said Lyndsay. "It will be great to have it upgraded and have everything new," said Lyndsay.

A new deli is also planned.

One of the goals of the reworked, expanded space is to free up space for everyone shopping at or working at Marty's, with the current layout having outlived its design. "It's too crowded," both Lyndsay and Marty agreed.

Lyndsay and Marty said local and state permits have been coming in,

See **Marty's**, Page B9

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Using his tail for extra grip, Monty, a skink, chills at AquaRealm with business owner DJ Nelson. (Photo by Stephen Garfield)

**30 YEARS**

## AquaRealm Evolves From Pet Project To Major Supplier

BY STEPHEN GARFIELD  
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — AquaRealm is a place for animal, fish and reptile lovers.

Although the business has evolved and grown over its 30 years, its bottom line—a place animals happily call home—has never changed, says DJ Nelson, AquaRealm's original and current owner.

Nelson built the business from scratch, and today, it has five part-time employees in a spacious location at the intersection of Railroad Street and Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury.

AquaRealm hasn't always had such spacious surroundings. Its growth over the years has taken it from smaller spaces to its current home with a full showroom.

"I Started out here in St. Johnsbury under HodgePodge Pet & Supply," Nelson said. "Then moved it to Barnet, where I ran it out of my parents' walkout basement for 13 years. After that, we moved back to St. J, changed our name to AquaRealm, and we've been here ever since."

The move made believers out of AquaRealm - eventually. "The move back to St. J was met with skepticism - it wouldn't survive, wouldn't thrive," Nelson recalled. "I decided to go completely self-employed - I also had another full-time job at the time - and within the first year, we needed to hire staff, and it's grown from there."

AquaRealm is about pet supplies, and pets themselves, and has branched out into other areas, owner DJ Nelson said. "We're always evolving, always changing," he remarked. "We tried an e-commerce platform during Covid, but we didn't care for it or our customers during Covid, so we're hoping to have a new program in the next month or two. It'll

allow people to buy online from our website (aquarealmaquarium.org), so we'll do more local delivery and advertise it more - some of this we've always done." Of course, people can go to the store for supplies and talk about their pets with a staff that cares for all the residents, Nelson said.

Some staff go on field trips, Nelson noted. "Education is a big part of what we do," he said. "AquaRealm has the reputation we do because we know what we're doing. We have people from Mass, NY - they say we have so much more of the variety they're looking for - some people are surprised about that being up in northeast Vermont."

"We're knowledgeable about all our residents (pets)," he said with a smile.

Take Monty, for instance. A skink, "Monty is a regular on the educational endeavors we do because he's so friendly," DJ said. "Any chance to come out of his aquarium, he's all for it. We had a spot for the first time at last year's Caledonia County Fair and brought him, other reptiles, fish, small animals."

A curious little dude, Monty climbs all over Nelson during conversation. Skinks originally come from the Salmon Islands, Nelson said. "Right now skinks cannot be exported. We got this guy before they stopped exporting them. They typically reproduce slowly, one baby, maybe twins, every couple of years."

Asked if there is any one top-selling item in the store, "we're diverse. Fish and reptiles are still our best sellers, along with small animals, birds ... the dog and cat end of the business has grown significantly."

Overall, owner DJ Nelson said he is pleased with the current state of AquaRealm.

"We have the reputation we have because we know what we're doing," he said.

## Marty's

Continued from Page B9 and the planning process for the addition is going well.

"We definitely couldn't do this for 35 years without our supportive customers, the hard work of our employees and our vendors," said Lyndsay. She said many vendors working with Marty's "are so great," and the relationships are strong.

Though Lyndsay and James began dating in high school, she wasn't one of the scores of local teenagers who worked at Marty's during high school. She said she worked there just one day when the store was holding a company party, and all of Marty and Catherine's five kids and some of their friends were asked to help keep the doors open.

"He sent the kids in here to work; we didn't know what we

were doing," she said with a laugh.

Now, Lyndsay knows a lot about how Marty's works and is actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the growing family business and is deeply involved in the expansion work.

Marty said the expanded store would be larger than the size allowed by the town's bylaws, but the bylaws allow the town's Development Review Board to consider a proposal separately, and the board unanimously supported the plans for Marty's to expand.

Marty said that when the flooding cut people off some roads last summer, Marty saw expanded clientele coming from Calais, Cabot, and other communities. Marty was grateful they could make it to Route 2 and that Marty was there.

"A lot of towns would like to have a store," he said. "People want to be able to do all their shopping in one stop."

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30 YEARS

# Family Is The Engine Driving Three Decades Of Success At Mark's Automotive

BY ERIC SCHAFER  
Staff Writer

Barnet—Mark's Automotive reaches the 30-year mark this year. Based in a large shop that shares the same driveway as the residence of owners Mark and Laurie Jefferson, Mark has been working from home on McLaren Hill Road since 1995; this comfort is reflected in his business model and shared with his customers. Mark reminisced on opening his shop. "I always loved working on cars, anything with a motor," he said. "I love the challenge of repairing something that was broken." He developed as a mechanic and decided to be his own boss. "I told my wife I could make more money working for myself than I could someone else," he said. The walls of the automotive shop are adorned with family photos and seasonal game trophies, knickknacks and signage that would look just as at home in a recreational garage as they do within Mark's place of business.

Running the shop seems seamlessly integrated into Mark's life. "When we first opened the business, I worked six days a week, 12 hours a day. I didn't mind the work, so I didn't mind the time," he said. "We made money that way, but it was kinda out of a want." Mark grew up in Waterford and eventually built the garage in Barnet with the help of a few friends. The Jeffersons' home and business are right down the road from where Laurie grew up. Mark currently employs two mechanics. "My brother-in-law's worked for me for 29 of the 30 years. My brother did Auto Body-work here for 20 years. We've had some long-time employees; they weren't family, but they were like family," Mark said. The time in business has not been without its tests. Mark discussed the rapidly changing environment of mechanical work. "Cars have changed a lot in 30 years. There's a lot more technology," Mark said. "Even to run the business, there's a lot more technology. We started with hand-written invoices. Now, we order our



Mark's Auto Family. (From Left to Right) Gary Roy Jr., Tom Vogel, Laurie Jefferson, & Mark Jefferson on Feb. 11, 2025. (Photo by Eric Schaffer)

parts online. We used to get our information by books; now you subscribe to online repair manuals."

Despite the changes in the landscape, Mark's Automotive has maintained its goal of quality ser-

vice and has forged strong bonds in the community as a result. "I'm just trying to provide a good service to the community. Honest and fair work," Mark said. "We've always treated people like we want to be treated and have had some longtime customers... We've got customers we've had for 30 years. They've been loyal, they've been great, we've been fortunate."

is talking about spending a little less time working and more time with family. "We're comfortable with the size we are," Mark said. "That's our goal going forward, to keep moving along with the business but more time for family, our grandkids." Mark said he's grateful to a supportive family to help him succeed in the business and for "great" employees, both current in the past.

Now, after 30 years in business with a loyal customer base, Mark

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Teresa Poginy, owner of Teresa's Touch of Style in Lyndonville. (Courtesy)

30 YEARS

# Teresa's Touch of Style Beautifies Customers For 30 Years

BY ROSIE SMITH  
Staff Writer

LYNDON — Teresa's Touch of Style marks a 30-year milestone this year. Owner Teresa Poginy started her career in 1983 and credits the time spent at that first salon out of cosmetology school with the opportunity she needed for her future success. "I am eternally grateful to have had the opportunity to grow and learn ... Those years provided the necessary foundation for growth and work ethic," she said. Following that experience, Teresa moved on, renting a booth at a local salon, which helped her learn the business management part of the equation. Teresa's Touch of Style opened in 1995. A room within Teresa's home on Red Village Road was transformed into the salon, creating "an environment of home, children and career all into one location," she said. The space allowed her to expand in providing individual care in a private setting. "Having a space that feels comfortable, listening, authentically caring for those that sit in my chair has been just as important as providing a great style for them," she said. The salon offers various hair services, such as colors, highlights, cuts, blowouts, deep conditioning, and facial waxing. Teresa has gone through additional training to keep up with the trends of her profession, which has been a necessary achievement for her.

"I would not be here in this space without the dedicated clients that have followed and/or entrusted their hair-care stories to me," she said. "So many laughs, calming the nervous bride and life's sorrows are just a bit of the rich memories we, together, have made ... I have watched life unfold from childhood to adults. I love to make people smile and feel good about themselves. It has been a privilege and pleasure." In 2023, Teresa was attuned to her masters in Reiki — an intuitive healing modality she has incorporated into her services. Giving a Reiki-infused facial, scalp and neck massage with gentle shoulder stretching is a part of the relaxation-restorative service. **Functioning Despite Flooding** Flooding that hit the region on July 30, 2024 particularly devastated parts of the Red Village Road and impacted the lives of Teresa and her family. The rain-swollen Hawkins Brook, which used to run 150 feet from the Poginy home, jumped its banks and carved a channel straight through the family's backyard. Now the brook is at her back door. The event did not deter Teresa's determination to keep her salon open. "The landscape may have changed, but the service has not," she said. "Our sincere gratitude goes to all the help that has come our way. We live in a beautiful community filled with gracious hearts." More information about Teresa's Touch of Style can be found by calling 802-626-3132.




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**20 YEARS**

# Fenoff & Hale Build Business On Strong Foundation

BY ERIC SCHAFER  
Staff Writer

Fenoff and Hale Construction is a two-man construction team that marks 20 years in business this year.

Long-time friends Trent Fenoff and Nate Hale started renovating homes for family, then friends of family. Now, 20 years and an untold number of worksites later, the duo comfortably builds homes for NEK residents.

Fenoff and Hale say they've always felt content working on small-scale residential projects and look to keep the business model that works for them. They had employees for a few seasons, but during the 2008 recession, they returned to being just them and have remained that way since.

"We had a big crew when we started, but then '09 came, and we whittled it down to just him (Nate) and I," Fenoff said.

Starting together in a different company in Danville, the two carpenters decided to take on the construction business for themselves.

"We both worked together for Laferriere Construction," Hale said. "Trent worked there for nine years, and I worked there for three. We decided we wanted to work for ourselves."

Since then, they have mainly been servicing the Danville, St Johnsbury, and Lyndon areas but are willing to travel further for the right job. Hale said they will often travel for friends and clients.

"We have some good customers



Nate Hale, left, and Trent Fenoff, of Fenoff and Hale Construction, take a break from a house-building job on Bruce Badger Memorial Highway in Danville on Thursday, March 27, 2025. (Photo by Dana Gray)

that we work for up here," he said. "They have a house in Hanover so we go down there occasionally and so we've worked for some of their friends in the White River and Lebanon area."

They take on all kinds of residential or small commercial jobs, from building homes to roofing and siding. The crew of two has done hundreds of jobs in 20 years. They've done work on Littleton Hospital and the Mount Eustis

Temporary Sheriff's Department. They've even raised a hemp barn constructed of unconventional hemp fiber.

Fenoff's wife, Amanda Fenoff, handles all of the finances and paperwork for the business.

Fenoff and Hale are community-minded, giving money to local schools through sponsorships.

They went to school at the St. Johnsbury Academy, and it was in the technical education classes

provided there that they got their first appetite for construction.

Fenoff and Hale said they're grateful for the customers they've served throughout their careers, including Fenoff's mother, who gave them their first job.

That first job was shared with friends and family through word of mouth, setting them on course for future success.

**5 YEARS**

# Future's Pregnancy Care Celebrates Serving Women

BY ROSIE SMITH  
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Futures Pregnancy Care on Church Street reaches its 5th anniversary this year.

The pregnancy support center provides information, education and "life-affirming options" for people facing unexpected pregnancies, said Futures Executive Director Carmen Menard.

Five years ago, when Menard retired from her career with Passumpsic Bank, she was approached by a pastors' prayer group that was organizing a pregnancy resource center and needed to find someone to run it. Carmen was offered the position of executive director. Her first response was, "I need to pray about this."

She said she felt led to say yes, and on June 1, 2019, she began two weeks of training to become a Life-Affirming Specialist.

The next step in the plan was to find a location for the center. The former Pearsons Funeral Home on Church Street (owned by Tyler and Kathy Hebert) was up for rent. After going through extensive renovations of the downstairs rooms, the building became the home for the care center. Following a year of retirement, Menard assumed her new role and opened the doors to the public for Futures



Carmen Menard, executive director of Futures Pregnancy Care in Lyndonville, is shown with a new ultrasound machine, purchased for the center by the non-profit, pro-life organization PreBorn! (Photo by Rosie Smith)

Pregnancy Care on Jan. 1, 2020.

Two weeks later, the facility had to close because of the COVID pandemic, and when the facility reopened six weeks later, pandemic-related restrictions were put into place.

Four volunteers currently work at the pregnancy center. All of them have gone through training. Two registered nurses, one who has been with Futures for the past four years and another who is currently being trained, are also part of the team. A fundraising campaign is underway to help offset the expenses for this training.

RNs are responsible for operating the center's ultrasound machine.

Clientele have multiple ways of approaching the center: walk-in;

calling the center (802-427-4199); or going to Futures' website (futurespregnancycare.org) and sending an email requesting assistance. Women and young girls, ages 14 through 53 and all ages in between, have walked through the center's doors, said Menard.

She said she's assisted people from all around the area, including Canada. The number of clients has doubled in the last couple of years.

Menard meets with all individuals who go to the center. A free ultrasound is done. Carmen said she has been trained to tell clients what they will go through, whether they decide to keep the baby or have an abortion. She said she shares facts and has worked with individuals from all denomina-

tions of faith and those not religious.

Futures Pregnancy offers supplies necessary to prepare for a baby. Diapers, blankets, bottles, etc. are provided for first-time pregnancies. There are classes for moms-to-be, which include topics such as parenting, life skills, financial advice and more. Women participating in these classes can do so in person or remotely. When a male accompanies the woman to the center, he is also provided with counseling.

Menard said she seeks to share Futures' benefits with the local community. She holds an annual banquet and visits churches and organizations to discuss the work done at Futures.

Her presentations often include a history of how society has changed over time in regards to abortion.

"In 1968, pregnancy centers began to form ... as an alternative to abortion," Menard shares.

In 2022, the ruling Roe v Wade that legalized abortion in 1973 was overturned, which now means that each state should make their own laws on the subject of abortion, Menard shares. "Pregnancy Centers are a part of life today. We have ads and social media everywhere to serve women so that they can find a different way. We tell all the women we are here for them."

## Guyer

Continued from Page B8  
both took classes in Montpelier to become real estate appraisers.

They bought the company in December 2006.

"At that point, it was Reynolds Real Estate, Inc., and it encompassed the real estate sales and real estate appraisals and it got a little bit confusing, and so we very quickly did a DBA (doing business as) Morrill & Guyer Associates and Reynolds Real Estate Appraisal Services, two separate companies," she said.

Howard Reynolds had founded Reynolds Real Estate, and Harold Dresser took it over from him; it was Dresser from whom she and Morrill bought the business. Morrill retired in 2012.

"He was one of the nicest men I've known," she said of Morrill. "He's one of the sweetest men in the world."

A few years ago, Guyer, by now operating independently, decided to move on from the original name of Reynolds Real Estate Apprais-

al Services and instead insert her initials: AKG (for Annie Kempton Guyer) Appraisals.

She's seen the markets at their quietest and peak, and interest rates rise and fall over the years.

When Guyer first embarked on her real estate career, "The interest rates were like 18 percent, so needless to say, I wasn't real busy! But I kept my license, and I did other work, and I kept my license over the years, and I got into appraisals. I started working here because you have to do a lot of training to become an appraiser, and that was in April of 2004," she said.

Morrill and Guyer took over just before the Great Recession struck ... and it was a tough time.

"The banks didn't pay us ... we hung in there, and then, of course, things went the other way, and we became very busy," said Guyer.

It's not common to have both a real estate agent and an appraiser offered under the same roof so that's a distinction that Guyer's location has long offered clients. Her son, Nick, also hangs his real estate shingle at her business, and he's also a commercial appraiser

with his own business separate from AKG Appraisals.

The current real estate market has quieted after a peppy couple of years through the pandemic and after. "It has really faded away," said Guyer in a recent interview. "I think some of that has to do with the interest rates. They were very high when I first got my real estate license, and then they went down and stayed down forever ... it was so busy for so long. Don and I used to have to tell the banks that we couldn't get to an appraisal for two months, and now it's like, 'Sure, I can get it done next week.'"

Supply is a problem. "There isn't as much on the market," said Guyer. "Inventory is down, so I think that around here, there seem to be plenty of buyers, but there isn't as much for them to buy."

Guyer said of the NEK market, "I think it's often out-priced (for locals) because we've had so many sales to out-of-staters ... People want to be part of this vibrant biking and skiing community."

Asked about her success and having maintained a strong rep-

utation as a dependable fixture in the local real estate services market for so long, Guyer reflected, "I think that the most important thing about being successful if I was giving a young person advice, is you have to be genuine. You have to really care about the people you're working with."

Guyer grew up in Peacham, and has made the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont her life's work. Her website for the Morrill & Guyer Associates real estate arm of the business is, appropriately enough, <http://homeinthekingdom.com/>

The website for AKG Appraisals can be found at: <https://akgappraisals.com/>

As to what's kept her at it for so many years, Guyer said, "It's always fun when people come back to you, or when they tell a friend to call you, and then you work with them. For me, I always feel like when I do real estate, it's more quality than quantity. You just spend the time and you're honest with people."

Guyer and her husband have four grown children and six grandchildren.