



WESTMINSTER CARES CELEBRATES OLDEST CITIZENS



On Sept. 21, Westminster Cares and town residents recognized Westminster's 90+ year-old citizens during the annual Celebration of Aging.

The event was held outdoors, on the back lawn of the Institute with 65 people in attendance including guests of honor, their families, volunteers, board members and members of the community. The weather cooperated for a beautiful, sunny day to honor our oldest community residents with a presentation and lunch.

The highlight of the event was the presentation by Pete Harrison, vice president, addressing each of the honored guests. The lively presentation included interesting family history; places they've lived; companies they've worked for; and stories about their lives in the community. Given Pete's love of old cars, he even found out which cars were their favorites from their youth.

Westminster currently has at least 13 residents who are 90 years of age or older: Bob Gay, Charlotte Kurkul, Bill Smidutz, Randy Major, Don Nowers, Bill O'Connor (who was unable to attend), Keith Gallup and "newcomers" Alma Beals, Lucille Donovan, Richard Gay, Betty Kennedy, Carolyn Muzzey and David Rohn.

This year, 12 residents were able to attend the event.

The group's ages are as follows: five are 90, two are 91, one is 92, one is 93, two are 94, one is turning 100 and one is 102!

Many attendees and family members had not seen one another in several years and in some cases their friendships go back as far as grade school. They enjoyed reminiscing and catching up on their lives. It was wonderful to witness the strong connections that our community inspires.

Westminster Cares board and committee members decorated tables with flower-filled pumpkins and gourds; served a lunch of soups and cornbread and made apple crisp with ice cream for dessert. Thank you to Sarah James and Smokin' Bowls catering for the delicious soups and cornbread. Honorees were thanked for their contributions to the community and given a gift bag to take home.

Next fall we will include anyone born in 1935 or earlier - if that's you or someone you know, please give a call at 722-3607 to let us know.

In photos by Ira Wilner, clockwise from top, the Muzzseys, Richard Gay with Don Nowers; Pete Harrison greets Charlotte Kurkul; and Bill Smidutz.



NEW TOWN BUMPER STICKER & CELEBRATING INCLUSIVITY



The Westminster West Parade on Sept. 7 included children from all over Westminster and the Festival in Westminster on Sept. 14 included everything from sheep to shiny beads this year. The Westminster Inclusion Committee was also there at both events to encourage everyone to introduce our new "One Wonderful Westminster" bumper stickers and to register local residents to vote.

David Perry, a Westminster graphic artist, designed the bumper stickers and a local donor paid for them to be printed (thank you!). The town also printed stickers with the logo which are also available.

At both events, just after lunch and in between musical performances, representatives of organizations which serve the wider community were honored and presented with copies of the Declaration of Inclusion.

In Westminster West, Rev. Susie Webster Toleno, and Lise Kavanaugh were present to receive copies on behalf of the Westminster West Church and library. In Westminster, Cole Streeter, the Fire Chief, Lieutenant Joel Howard on behalf of the Sheriff's Office, Lori Larue and Donna Dawson, representing Westminster Cares, Elizabeth Hardy, Principal of the Westminster Center School (not pictured) and Sue Kessler, Assistant Executive Director of Kurn Hattin Homes for Children, and Alison Baitz, Director of the Butterfield Library and Lucy Mat-

teau (see photo) all took away copies ready to hang, honoring their work bringing the community together.

Next up for the Inclusion Committee is Voting Day. The new bumper stickers will be given out to voters by volunteers and children from Kurn Hattin and Westminster Center School.

The Town Office and libraries also have the bumper stickers available for free. The committee hopes that even in times such as the election -when differences seem insurmountable- Westminster will celebrate the diversity of the town. Our town institutions serve everyone and with this campaign we hope to celebrate all they do to keep us safe, healthy and learning.

Performances of Merrily We Roll Along will be from Nov. 1 to 10, Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Shows will take place at Next Stage Arts in Putney.

The running time is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission. Tickets can be purchased at <https://www.wildgoose-players.com/tickets>.

WILD GOOSE PLAYERS BRING BROADWAY REVIVAL TO PUTNEY

The smash Broadway revival of Merrily We Roll Along has just closed, so Wild Goose has brought the show to your backyard at a fraction of the price!

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This groundbreaking musical traces the dissolving (more like exploding) friendship of three besties, but in this exploration, time moves backwards! We open at a party where the last fraying fibers of connection are violently cut, and slowly reveal, as the clock rewinds, the beauty that was their friendship years before.

Sondheim was at the height of his powers when he crafted the exceptional score and slightly autobiographical lyrics that guide us through the struggles of modern life and the choices we make.

Featuring superb performances from a 15 person ensemble, this production, directed by David Stern, with

music direction by Ken Olsson, will have you coming back for more.

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EARLY DEADLINE!

DUE TO THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, THE DECEMBER GAZETTE HAS AN EARLY DEADLINE ON WED. NOV. 13, AND AN EARLY PUBLICATION DATE OF NOV. 20. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER.

Our Monthly Community Newspaper November 2024 Vol. 20 No. 11

Westminster Gazette

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OUR WORKING LANDSCAPE - THE FARMERS' TENT

Westminster has many farms and businesses which work the land to create products and jobs, while making the landscape that we see today. The *Gazette* will be highlighting this part of our economy with short articles and letters which explain and recognize the importance of our working landscape. By Mary Scherbatskoy

One of the high points of the Westminster Festival on Sept. 14 was the display "Farmers of Westminster", spearheaded by Paul Harlow.

Nineteen photo panels featuring Westminster's farms and sugaring operations together with produce samples, cheese tasting, hayrides, sheepdog demonstrations and corn on the cob were all enjoyed in (or near) the Farmer's Tent.

The display included photos of each of Westminster's major commercial farms, with background and contact information provided by the farmers. These were put together by the Gazette's own Mary Norton, and displayed in a big white tent loaned by Westminster West Library.

Also in the tent were a display of organic vegetables from High Meadows Farm, samples from Perry Family Mapleworks, with cheese tasting and sales from Parish Hill Creamery. Paul Harlow boiled up some of the farm's sweet corn which was enjoyed by 150 festival-goers.

Nearby was a display of organic produce from Milkweed Farm, and cheese samples from Vermont Shepherd. The KHH kids brought a display of their produce from the Kurn Hattin farm. Out in the field, Joel Holton took people on hay rides, and Liz Shaw of Morse Brook Farm brought dogs and sheep for a shepherding demonstration.

The farms represented were Allen Brothers, Basin Farm, Bazin Farms, Harlow Farm & Farmstand, High Meadows Farm, Hope Roots Flower Farm, Holton Farm, Livewater Farm, Milkweed Farm, Morse Brook Farm, Parish Hill Creamery, Old Athens Farm, Perry Family Mapleworks, Sidelands Sugarbush, Vermont Shepherd, and Westminster Farms, plus the sugaring businesses LoLo Mapleworks, Martin Collins Tree Farm, and Tim Merton.

Some of these Westminster farms - both East and West - date back to early days, and some have been established by enterprising arrivals.


There has been a lot of innovation in Westminster farming: diversifying into new retail products, developing modern methods of organic production, making operations more efficient through technical advances.

The Farmers' Tent reminded us where food comes from, and how land and people can work together and remain at the heart of our modern community.

In photos, from top, Paul Harlow and visitors to the Farmer's Tent, and some of the farm displays.



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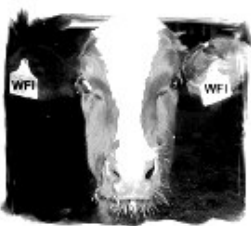
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Underwriting Support is a donation of at least \$300 annually and does not include advertising. Underwriters are listed in the box on page 6 each month.

We also welcome article submissions that would be of interest to the community. We ask for a maximum size limit of 500 words, and reserve the right to edit for content and length. Thank you!

On-line at: **www.westminstervt.org**

REPORT FROM THE TOWN MANAGER: THANK YOU, CHUCK!

Looking back, the month of October provided more opportunities to find better ways to continue our mission to improve service levels to the residents of Westminster.

I attended the Vermont League of Cities and Towns' Town Fair on Oct. 2, in Killington. The event brought together local officials, community leaders, and vendors to discuss important issues facing municipalities. Some of the featured workshops included: sustainable practices, community engagement, and local governance. Attendees also had the opportunity to network, share best practices, and explore exhibits showcasing products and services for towns and cities.

Jim Cantore from The Weather Channel was the keynote speaker at Town Fair. Cantore was fresh off of reporting from Hurricane Helene and spoke about what was developing with the tropical storm that turned into Hurricane Milton. After a brief stop in Georgia, he was right back on location in Florida. Cantore is a Vermonter and shared stories about changes in the Vermont landscape over the years.

October also saw the debut of our micro podcast,

"Westminster Deep Dive." So far, JB and Hannah have discussed a few Selectboard meetings, and I look forward to their future discussions. If time is at a premium for you, their brief summaries might be just what you're looking for. The link to the Deep Dive is on the homepage of the town website: www.westminstervt.org.

Looking forward to November, the leaves are just about all off the trees. As you know, November can bring varied precipitation, including rain and the potential for early snow, especially later in the month.

As the month progresses, the likelihood of snow increases, particularly in higher elevations. It's advisable to check the local forecasts often in November for more accurate and updated predictions.

Local temperatures in town in November are typically cool temperatures, with average highs ranging from the mid-40s to low 50s °F and lows often dropping to the 20s °F. The changing weather serves as a reminder of some of the challenges that are with us year round, but seem amplified during the winter.

The varied landscape of Westminster can show one area in the midst of severe weather, while other parts of

town aren't subjected to the same hazards. Traffic and other environmental concerns also pose problems during the winter.

So with that potential weather looming, please slow down and drive safely on the roads. Later in November, Town Hall will be closed on Monday, November 11th in honor of Veterans Day. We'll be closed at 12:00 pm on Wednesday, November 27th and closed for Thanksgiving on November 28th.

Just after going to press in October, longtime Road Foreman Chuck Lawrence resigned his position with the town's highway department. While we only had the opportunity to work together for about a year, I sincerely appreciate not only this past year, but all of his efforts over the past several years as foreman. I wish him all the best in his future endeavors!

Please remember and honor a Veteran on November 11th and I wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Lou Bordeaux,
Town Manager

FALL FUN AT BUTTERFIELD LIBRARY - MEMOIRS & MOISTURE METERS

By Alison Baitz, Librarian

Hello Westminster! I hope everyone is having a wonderful autumn so far!

This month, it's all about what materials Butterfield has to offer — so I'm highlighting both some books that are on the way and a neat tool available for you to borrow.

On the way are new novels by Louise Penny (The Grey Wolf), Susan Minot (Don't Be a Stranger), Elizabeth Strout (Tell Me Everything), Louise Erdrich (The Mighty Red), David Baldacci (To Die For), and Tami Hoag (Bad Liar), among many others!

As far as non-fiction goes, I've ordered several craft books that our patrons might be particularly interested in (think: modern improv quilting, quilts made during the New Deal, a book of knitting patterns for children to enjoy).

Also on order are books that cover a wide range of topics, from postpartum depression to menopause, from chocolate to gratitude (the latter being the new book by Robin Wall Kimmerer!) As

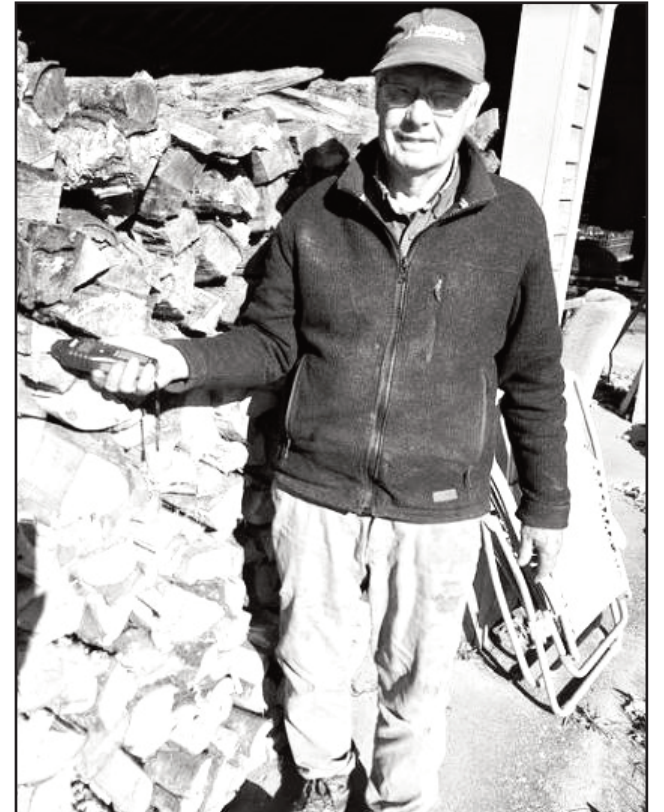
far as memoirs go, on the way are those authored by Ina Garten, Neneh Cherry, Bill Clinton, and Nancy Pelosi!

We've got a truly excellent season of reading ahead of us. Reach out if you'd like to be notified when anything specific arrives — and keep an eye on the library's Facebook page to get up-to-the-minute information about exactly when these books are in!

Lastly, did you know that Butterfield has two wood moisture meters available to borrow? Burning wood that is adequately dry provides a number of benefits — it'll save you money, keep your appliances heating efficiently (and safely), and reduce air pollution!

Come borrow a wood moisture meter to ensure that you're burning the right stuff.

In photo, Paul Harlow checks the moisture content in his firewood with a wood moisture meter. There are two that can be borrowed from Butterfield Library.



NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER CARES

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The Westminster Cares Board of Directors met Wednesday October 9th at 4:30PM at the Westminster Institute with President Lori Larue presiding. The following board members attended: Vice President Pat Goodell, Vice President Pete Harrison, Treasurer Frannie Waldron, Secretary Doug Oftedahl, Don Dawson, Nancy Dalzell, Cindy Moses and Director Donna Dawson. Miriam Lanata and Kathy Elliot were unable to attend.

Donations received through October 2024:

In Honor Of:

In honor of Uncle Bill (Smidutz) on his birthday from Peggy O'Connor and Jim Hipkiss.

In honor of all Westminster Cares does for seniors in our community from Charlotte Kurkul.

Memorials:

In memory of Richard (Steve) Damon from Warren and Carolyn Muzzey, and in memory of Uncle

Steve Damon from Robert and Jane Kirkpatrick.

In loving memory of Jane French from:

Ellen and Bob Allman
Robert and Jane Kirkpatrick
Richard and Mary Noyes
Chris and Melissa Pearce
Susie and Jack Peters

In memory of Laura Leonard from Nancy Dalzell

In loving memory of

Bill O'Connor from:

Priscilla Allbee
Karen and Chuck Brown
Lynn Raymond-Empey
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Bill Smidutz

Jennifer Stoner and Lewis Streeter

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Nature Notes - Are American Kestrels Declining?

by Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist

Our Putney Mountain Hawk Watchers are wrapping up our 2024 hawk migration and it has been a good one with a record number of 18,650 raptors and the season isn't quite over.

I haven't been able to hike up the mountain for the last three years due to my weak ankles having been broken too many times. Do I mind not going up? Of course I do! I've been a part of the hawk watch for almost 50 years. It's fall and it's time to head up the mountain.

The hawks we see high in the air migrating give us very different looks from the hawks we see perched in nearby trees. We are much better at identifying overhead than when they are in our faces.

Today I'm going to talk about the American Kestrels. They are small, about the size of Bluejays, and are the smallest of the three falcons that we have in New England. The three are Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrines and all have long pointed wings, long tapered tails and fly with rowing wing beats.

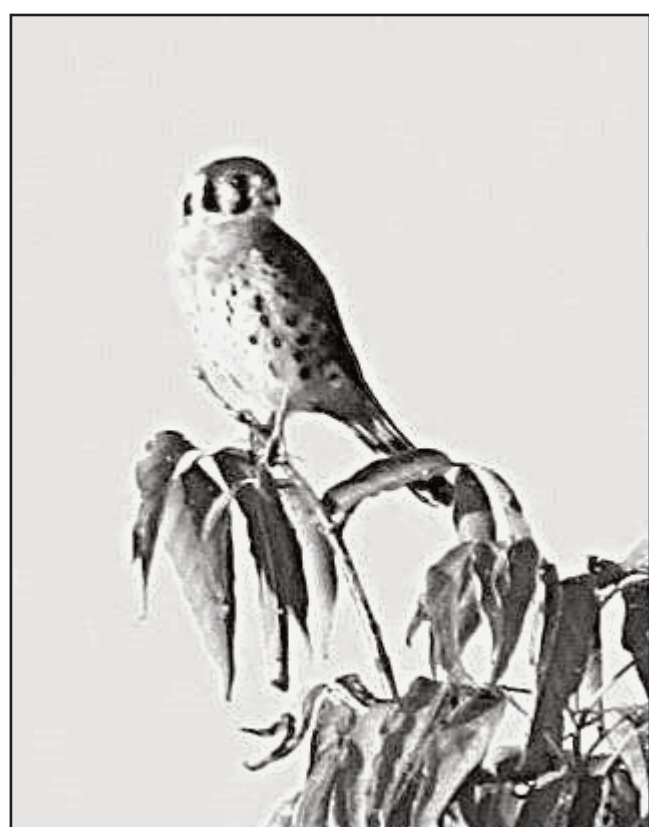
They are handsome birds with white underparts, buff chest with black spots, black streaks on the face and blue wings on the male while the female has brown wings.



Kestrel photos by Don Clark

They are the hawks you see perching on fence posts and wires and often on the very top of small trees looking for their favorite food of grasshoppers. Many times they hover when they spot food. They also eat other large insects such as beetles, dragonflies, moths, and caterpillars. They have a short life span of about five years and they mate for life.

Kestrels nest in natural tree cavities, often old Flicker or Pileated Woodpecker holes. They will accept man-made nest boxes that have sawdust or wood chips on the bottom that they push aside and lay 4 or 5 eggs on the bare floor. The chicks leave the nest cavity after about a month.



While the other raptors are holding their own, the kestrels have been declining for several years. There appear to be many reasons, but we are really not sure.

We hear of loss of habitat for breeding and feeding, nest competition by starlings, climate change affecting the lack of insects and the timing of their food during nesting, insecticides on farms and lawns, and fewer large dead snags available for nesting.

WESTMINSTER SAMPLER: BASEBALL GLORY

By Jessie Haas

With the World Series underway as this article is written, it's a good time to look back to one of Westminster's connections to baseball greatness. Sports have always been important to Westminster; the playing fields behind the Institute, and Hadley Field near the high school have been the scenes where organized games have played out, and baseball was long a favorite game here since the 1920s.

Ruth Grandy's father, Del Stone, "was baseball around here," Ruth remembers, and was the manager of Westminster's semipro team. According to Norm Wright, the team was semipro in the sense that a few people were paid to play, "between five and twenty bucks. Del was pretty tight-lipped about who he was paying." Westminster played local towns like Brattleboro, Townshend, Wardsboro, Wilmington, Putney, and Chester. "We were all right," Norm Wright remembered. "We held our own."

Other players included Bob Rice, Sam Streeter, Goldie Goldsmith, and Ralph Buck. Rice used to bat with a peavy handle, which could account for his record as the team's best home run hitter.

Frank Sawyer made bats; he got blanks from a shop in Wardboro, made to be turned into Louisville Sluggers, and planed them down on his lathe. They were 39 inches long, and not every player could handle them. Games were on Sunday afternoons from the late 1940s into the early '60s.

That's how Carleton (Pudge) Fisk (in photos) of Charlestown, NH, came to play here. He was playing first base for an American Legion team at the time, and they didn't play on Sundays, so he played in a few games for Westminster.

Ruth Grandy remembered that "It was my father who put Pudge Fisk behind the plate. Sam Streeter was very upset." Streeter was usually the Westminster catcher.

Fisk would go on to be a pro-baseball player of great longevity, as backstop for the Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox. He played until age 45, and broke a record for career games with his 2,226th game behind the plate. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2000, and both the White Sox and Red Sox retired his numbers; he was inducted wearing a Red Sox cap, despite having played more seasons with the White Sox.

Fisk's most memorable moment as a professional



came in the 12th inning for Game Six of the 1975 World Series, when he hit a pitch that went down the left field line heading for foul territory. Fisk, on his way to first base, jumped in the air and waved his arms to the right as if trying to steer the ball, which ricocheted off the foul pole, giving Boston a 7-6 victory in one of baseball's all-time great games.

But locally Fisk is remembered for a homer he hit 10 years earlier, at Hadley Field in Westminster, in a game with the American Legion Post 37 team. Bill LeConey wrote about it in the Brattleboro Reformer on September 27, 2024. The homer in question was extraordinary, according to Hal Bushway, who had formerly played for the Legion team and was watching that day.

"I don't know if anybody ever measured it, but it was well over 400 feet. For a high school kid, that's pretty amazing. There's a road that goes beyond center and left field, and there's a fence that determines the property between what the high school owns and the development, and it landed over the fence, and probably rolled into somebody's yard or something. It was a shot."

Frank Jarvis, Fisk's teammate, remembered laughingly that "It was just disgusting for me to watch." For



many years a little sign and a white x on a tree marked where the ball landed, but after nearly 60 years, it is long gone. The homer is still remembered, though, by many of the players who were there.

Just as a historic reminder: Hadley Field in Westminster is older than the Bellows Falls Union High School which we now think of as hosting it. In 1966, a year after Fisk's great homer there, Westminster joined Rockingham, Athens, and Grafton to form Union District 27. The towns built a successor to the old, overcrowded Bellows Falls High School (now the Middle School) which most Westminster students attended.

The site was part of the Basin Farm, then owned by G. Preston James. Though the school was in Westminster, the district named it Bellows Falls Union High School at the request of the Bellows Falls Alumni Association, to allow continuity of sports teams.

The football and track teams had long been using Hadley Field, which is now thought of by many people as being in Bellows Falls. However, alert sports reporters are careful to use the "Westminster" dateline for their articles.

Keep up with all the news about old times with a membership in the Westminster Historical Society. You can now join directly from our website, www.westminsterhistory.org.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE

The Westminster Fire & Rescue Department holds their monthly meetings at 7 p.m. on the 1st Tuesday of the month and a combined drill on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Rescue training is the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

Next association meeting Tuesday, Nov. 5 at 7 p.m.

The Prudential Committee normally meets once or twice a month. A warning will be posted 48 hours prior to each meeting.

The Prudential Committee meets on the 3rd Sunday of every month at the Fire House on Grout Ave. at 10 a.m.

Number of calls in September: 20

Number of calls through October 24th : 36

Number of calls calendar year to date: 417

Number of calls fiscal year, July 1st to date: 172

Association Meeting: The Westminster Fire and Rescue Association met for their regular meeting October 1st with President Nancy Deitz presiding. There

were 30 members present and 7 members excused. Currently there are 47 members of the volunteer fire department. The department welcomed Josh Stillerman and Gwen Shaw as new members under the 6-month probation guidelines.

Emergency responses: September turned out to be especially busy with 50 calls for the month. Here is the breakdown for the 50 calls: 27 rescue/medical calls; 4 motor vehicle accidents; 6 box alarm/false alarm; 1 smoke/odor investigation; 5 Mutual Aid, 1 to Bellows Falls, 1 to Keene, 1 to Chester, 1 to Ludlow, 1 to Putney; 1 Illegal burn; 1 service call; 2 cancelled en route; 3 lift assists.

Halloween Open House: The fire house will be open Halloween, Thursday evening the 31st to hand out candy, cider and popcorn from 5 until around 7:30.

Off Road: The fire department is looking for names of anyone who has an off road vehicle that they would be willing to operate in case of an emergency

requiring off road or 4 wheelers.

Contact any member of the department if this is something you are able to make available.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS FOR SALE: Anyone want to buy a fire extinguisher? We have them for sale and there are 4 sizes available. See the Chief or stop by the fire station for more information if interested.

The Westminster Fire & Rescue Association welcomes donations throughout the year from anyone wishing to remember or honor a loved one or a friend. All memorial donations go into our scholarship fund to be given out at graduation.

Send donation to: Westminster Fire & Rescue Association, PO Box 111 Westminster, VT 05158.

As always, we would like to thank the members of the community for their continued support of the fire department.

Check us out on our website at www.westminster-fireandrescue.org.

Aged in Vermont

Westminster Cares, Inc.

WHO VOLUNTEERS IN OUR COMMUNITY? AND WHY?

Matthew Conklin has delivered Meals on Wheels for five years, helping his wife, Claudia, who was very active in Westminster Cares. Claudia passed away in 2023. "I still do Meals on Wheels today, in part to honor her and to help the community," Matt says.

He's also a volunteer driver for Westminster Cares and is quick to lend a hand when director Donna Dawson asks for his help.

Westminster Cares isn't Matt's only volunteer gig. He's on the Westminster Planning Commission, which is rewriting the town plan, and has been a justice of the peace for more than 25 years.

Lately Matt has been volunteering in the Community Asylum Seekers Program, helping new families to settle in the area. It was fun, he says, when he used his truck to help a couple from Afghanistan move into Bellows Falls. He learned firsthand how volunteering can make a difference.

Volunteering is in Matt's DNA. "I volunteer because in my family that is what we did," he says. "We were always active in our community." His mother was active in the Orange County NY Land Trust. His dad was on the local planning commission and in the Lions Club and Rotary, and Matt participated in 4-H.

"So, for me, volunteering is my way to give back to my community and honor Claudi. Helping is something I enjoy and I know Claudi is smiling too."

Don Dawson also started out as a volunteer, a dozen years ago, delivering Meals on Wheels. He was often on the road selling software. "I just felt that, because my work had me away from home and I was always on the road, I never connected to the community," he says. Volunteering was one way to build a connection.

"Westminster Cares was and is still very rooted in our community and it felt like a great way to meet members of our town while filling a serious need," he says. "Being able to drop off food and then chat a bit proved to be not only endearing but also very enlightening. I got to learn so much about our local community, shortly after relocating here."

In 2011, Don joined the board of directors. He points to the annual Celebration of Westminster's 90+ Year Olds as one of his favorite activities. "These are some truly special people. They've lived through some extraordinary times and have seen much. Over the many years that we've had this event, we've had a great number of 80-year-olds tell us how much they were looking forward to participating in the 90-year-old celebration, but they'll wait their turn. That alone shows how Westminster Cares has impacted the spirits of our elders."

Lately Don's contribution includes elder tech classes, tutoring people in use of their phones, laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices once a month.

Not just giving – Don gets something in return: a connection with other townspeople. He likes to tell the story of taking much-beloved Artie Aiken on a Meals on Wheels delivery. Just once. Don had only his lunch hour to make the rounds, but Artie, who loved to chat, was in no great hurry. He gave Don the nickname "Speedy." That's a tale Don told at Artie's graveside service in 2017. Even today, he'll walk into Allen Brothers and be greeted with "Well, if it isn't Speedy!" by the coffee klatch.



As a volunteer, it's not the recognition that matters, he says. What I take away are the relationships. The truth of it is, getting to know Artie, as well as meeting some of the current Meals recipients, gives extra meaning to my life.

Don has volunteered as a Big Brother and also for the Winter Overnight Shelter. He has a radio show on WOOL-91.5 FM, in Bellows Falls and recently joined their board. Just about every nonprofit organization in town is in need of volunteers, he points out – not just Westminster Cares, which needs drivers, visitors to the homebound, and board members.

"I'm trying to give something back," he says. "Making a donation is important, but you can't put a price on giving your time."

Don isn't the only Westminster Cares volunteer who came under Artie Aiken's spell.

Cindy Moses has been delivering Meals on Wheels for 13 years and on the board for three years. "Over the years I have become attached to the folks that I deliver to," she says. "I've made connections with people that I would never have met if not for volunteering."

"When Artie Aiken was alive, he and I would pick peaches from his trees and I would make peach jam and bring it to him. He was very appreciative, but I was the lucky one: I got to spend time with this sweet, spunky man."

Cindy responded to an article in the Westminster Gazette looking for volunteers to deliver Meals on Wheels when she first moved to Westminster in 2010. "I thought that it would be an opportunity to help out and meet people in the community as well," she says. "I had no idea how much I would get in return. The simple task of delivering a meal to someone and chatting with them for a few minutes is so pleasurable." Over the past several years, Cindy has also volunteered with Loaves and Fishes in Brattleboro and before that, the Putney Food Shelf.

It's a pleasure to be part of an organization of committed people who care so much about all the people in our community. "So often people who are aging or disabled can feel isolated and forgotten," she says. "Westminster Cares strives to keep these people connected to our community."

Interested in volunteering for Westminster Cares? We'd love to talk to you! Call 802-722-3607 or email Donna at wecares@sover.net.

In photo from left, Don Dawson, Cindy Moses and Matthew Conklin.

REMEMBRANCES

NOVEMBER 2024:

RAYMOND CHAMBERLAND, 74
4/10/1950 - 9/13/2024
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

DONALD HARLOW, 92
8/5/1932 – 9/21/2024
PUTNEY, VT

DIRK JAGER, 85
D. 9/9/2024
WESTMINSTER WEST, VT

WILLIAM "BILL" O'CONNOR, 91
9/26/1933 – 10/2024
WESTMINSTER, VT

FAITH LEARNED PEPE, 89
7/31/1935 - 8/6/2024
WESTMINSTER WEST, PUTNEY
AND N.Y.C.

MARY POWERS, 70
6/13/1954 - 10/4/2024
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

KENNETH ROKICKI
SAXTONS RIVER, VT

JESSICA RYEA, 41
5/18/1983 – 9/30/2024
WINDSOR, VT
FORMERLY WESTMINSTER WEST

DONALD SLIE SR., 88
D. 9/13/2024
WESTMINSTER, VT

HOWARD "BILL" SPAULDING, 67
9/7/1957 - 9/10/2024
BELLOWS FALLS, VT

MADLINE "MAGGIE" TAYLOR, 89
2/6/1935 - 9/28/2024
WINDSOR, VT
FORMERLY BELLOWS FALLS

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

There will be a celebration of the life of Donald Slie on Saturday, Nov. 9 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Westminster Institute for family and friends to come together and share memories.

HARLOW WINTER MARKET

Harlow's Farmstand will have a winter market this year, starting Dec. 12.

They will be open three days — Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

VENDORS NEEDED!

Vendors are wanted for the Family Holiday Celebration & Yuletide Market hosted by Compass School on Rt. 5 in Westminster Station on Friday, Dec. 13, 4-8 p.m.

We're seeking vendors/businesses/individuals to rent tables. The event will include shopping, food, and festive music open to all community members, families and children.

Call Sandra at Compass School for more information--802-428-3868

NORTHSTAR CONSOLIDATES REGIONAL HEALTH CENTERS

By Joshua R. Dufresne, MBA
CEO, North Star Health

As highlighted by the Green Mountain Care Board's recent guidance under Act 167, Vermont's healthcare system is at a crossroads. While their report focused mainly on area hospitals, most healthcare entities in our state are struggling.

Effective January 1, 2025, North Star Health will consolidate our Rockingham Health Center with our Springfield and Charlestown locations—a necessary move that underscores the urgent need for change.

Since 2020, volume at the Rockingham Health Center has dropped nearly 50%, from about 4,300 to about 2,300 primary care patients. With financial challenges driven by unfair reimbursement models, staffing shortages, and aging facilities, it's clear that we must rethink how care is delivered to ensure sustainability and access for all.

Though unsettling, these changes are essential to the bigger picture of preserving access to quality care in our rural communities. This will not affect our ability to serve patients. It's simply a reduction in our physical footprint.

Most individuals will have access to the same care

COMMUNITY FORUM
THURSDAY, NOV. 14
5:30 PM
ROCKINGHAM
HEALTH CENTER

team they've come to know at our Rockingham Health Center, just in a different location.

Not everyone will agree on the best path forward for healthcare in our state, but there is a need for systemic change. No single solution will resolve the challenges faced by North Star or Vermont's healthcare system.

Consolidating services into fewer, better-supported locations is one step we must take to ensure care remains accessible to everyone in our community. We have engaged closely with our elected officials, who have heard that reimbursement models must evolve to keep health care accessible in our state.

At the same time, our community members are feeling the burden of rising taxes and cannot bear much

more. We invite stakeholders to join a community forum in the waiting room of the Rockingham Health Center on November 14, 2024 at 5:30pm to discuss the change and share ideas for the future.

Another avenue to having your voice heard is by contacting your state legislators to advocate for policies that support community health centers. Lawmakers need to hear from patients that rural healthcare requires fairer reimbursement models, stronger workforce support, and investments in sustainable infrastructure.

This is a call to action for all of us. As a community, we need to support new models of care that prioritize access and sustainability without compromising quality. Investments in additional transportation options, like MOOver buses, medical rides, and North Star Health's Community Health Team help bridge the gap for patients impacted by these changes. Programs like these can ensure no one is left behind as we navigate this transition.

If we continue to operate on a model that no longer meets the realities of today's healthcare landscape, we will see more closures and fewer options for care. But if we embrace change and support providers and patients in this new era, we can build a stronger, more resilient healthcare system for everyone in Vermont.

MYSTERY PHOTO

Recognizing Volunteers



Volunteering is a well-known activity for many Westminster residents, and this old newspaper clipping honors some of our volunteers. A few of these folks have passed on, but some are still active volunteers in the community. How many do you recognize? Who are these volunteers and what were they volunteering for?

NEW TAI CHI CLASS

A beginner Tai Chi class is forming at Westminster Institute in November, co-sponsored by Westminster Cares and taught by Oriental Healing Arts Association instructor Leslie Lassetter.

It will be held at 11 a.m. on Tuesdays. The first class is free on Tuesday, Nov. 12. Students may join through November or with permission of the instructor, beyond that. Class is ongoing.

Why do Tai Chi? It can improve blood pressure, arthritis, balance, heart problems and more. It can improve balance, especially useful on snowy, icy surfaces. Tai Chi can also engender emotional, mental and spiritual awareness. In addition to physical benefits, there are social benefits of meeting and moving with others.

Lassetter studied extensively with master teachers Gene Gaudreau and Jim Winner of OHAA.

There is also Seated Tai Chi Tuesdays at 9:45 .M. designed for those who cannot stand for an hour. Class size is small. Cost is \$20, or \$10-20 sliding scale.

Class cost for the 11 a.m. is \$10. Partial scholarships of \$5 per class are offered by Westminster Cares. For more info or to sign up, contact Donna Dawson at we-cares@sover.net or 802-722-3607.

WESTMINSTER HAPPENINGS

WE'RE ALWAYS UPDATING THE HAPPENINGS ENTRIES. IT IS YOUR GROUP'S RESPONSIBILITY TO LET US KNOW WHEN THINGS CHANGE OR WHEN SOMETHING SHOULD BE ADDED OR REMOVED. THANK YOU!

FAITH COMMUNITY

The First Congregational Church of Westminster

We welcome you to join us each Sunday at 10 a.m. There is a children's message at each service and fellowship after. We are located on Rt. 5. Rev. Richard O'Donnell is the Pastor.

Oct 31st. Trunk or Treat from 4:30-on. Church Parking Lot. All children are welcome to stop by.

Nov. 3rd. Worship at 10 am
Nov. 5th. Women's Fellowship 10:30 in Church Hall
Nov. 6th. Bible Study 6:30 pm in person and on zoom in the Church Hall

Nov. 10th. Worship at 10 with Communion
Nov. 12th. Craft Time 9:30 am Church Hall
Nov.13th. Bible Study 6:30 pm in person and on zoom in Church Hall

Nov. 17th. Worship at 10.
Nov. 18th Standing Committee 5:30 pm on Zoom
Nov.19th Craft time 9:30 in Church Hall

Nov. 24th Worship at 10 Advent Wreath making for homes after church.

Nov. 25th Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service 6:30 pm United Church School St. Bellows Falls

Nov. 26th Craft time 9:30 am Church Hall

We are also inviting all children in our community to join us to be in a no stress Christmas Pageant. All ages are welcome. Email richodonnell5@gmail.com if you are interested.

Nov. 25th Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service 6:30 pm United Church School St. Bellows Falls

Nov. 26th Craft time 9:30 am Church Hall

We are also inviting all children in our community to join us to be in a no stress Christmas Pageant. All ages are welcome. Email richodonnell5@gmail.com if you are interested.

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Following the service, we host a time of refreshments where you can get to know other members of our community. We offer many other services throughout the week, so there's something for everyone.

To learn more, call us at (802) 463-4323 or visit us. Also find us on Facebook. We're always happy to meet new people and welcome them into our church family.

ACTIVITIES

Butterfield Library hours are Mon., Tues. and Thur. 1 - 6 p.m. and Sat 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Westminster West Library Hours Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 1- 6 p.m., Saturday 10 - 2 p.m.

Accessible Gentle Yoga with Lisa Nigro
New classes starting in August.

Gentle Yoga with Lisa Nigro Aug.19-Oct. 21 - 10 weeks \$130, \$15 drop in (if space is available)
This is an all levels class with a focus on building strength, increasing range of motion and flexibility, and improving balance. All poses can be modified to be either more accessible or more challenging.

Radiance Yoga: A slow Yoga fusion class with focus on immune and nervous systems, balance, ways of breathing, deep relaxation for over all health. At Westminster West Congregational Church, 44 Church St. Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 a.m. \$15 per class or \$54 for 4 classes (paid for month). Instructor is Elizabeth Bunker, shimmerez@gmail.com. Call for further info : 603 835-2900, text 978 793-2256.

Living Strong with Ronnie Friedman, Karen Walter
On line - Mondays & Thursdays 722-3607

Tai Chi Class Tues. 9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.
Class Tues. 11 a.m.-noon Class Thursday 6-7 p.m.
Westminster Institute

Souper Wednesdays
Homemade soups at Congregational Church Rt. 5
January through April 12-2 p.m.
For deliveries Tina 802-376-7330

Putney Contradance
Last Sunday of month at 3 p.m.
Pierce's Hall, 121 East Putney Falls Road
Vaccinations, boosters & K95 masks
contradanceputney@gmail.com

Knitting Together
An Enjoyable Experience! Wednesdays 1- 3 p.m.
Village Square Booksellers, Bellows Falls
Bring your needles, we have yarn and casual instruction - all products donated locally.
Contact: Caroline 802-463-4653

Coffee Mornings - Coffee, Community, Conversation
Westminster West Library, Saturdays from 10 to 2. All welcome, please drop in!

THE GAZETTE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ITS UNDERWRITERS:

- 802 Credit Union
- Stacey & Tim Allen
- Kurn Hattin Homes
- Town of Westminster
- Westminster Cares
- Westminster Fire and Rescue Association
- Burtco Inc.
- The Dascomb Trust
- K Beebe Inc.
- American Wealth Administration Group

Zumba Fitness at Westminster Institute: Latin and world rhythm music, set to easy-to-follow choreography, with a focus on cardiovascular and muscular conditioning, flexibility, and balance. Hybrid Classes: Tuesdays & Thursdays at 4:30 p.m Pre-registration and status review is required; contact: ZIN Certified Instructor: Pauline Blake O'Brien, 802-376-5397, paulineblakeob@outlook.com.

MEETINGS

Town Clerk - 802-722-4091

Selectboard 2nd and 4th Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Planning Commission 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Conservation Commission meets by ZOOM every 4th Thursday at 7:15 p.m.

Development Review Board 1st Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Town Hall.

The Westminster Fire and Rescue meet on the 1st Tuesday every month, at 7 p.m. and a combined drill on the 3rd Tuesday at the Fire Station. 802-722-3178

911 Committee as needed

Westminster Cares Board 802-722-3607
1st Wed., 4:30 p.m., Westminster Institute on-line & in person

Westminster Historical Society Board
3rd Tuesday, 7 p.m. Town Hall 2nd floor

Westminster Institute Board 2nd Tues. 6:30 p.m., Westminster Institute jimmatteau@gmail.com

Westminster Gazette westminsternews@gmail.com
3rd Monday, 5 p.m., Westminster Institute

Westminster West Library Board 802-387-4682
2nd Wed. 7 p.m. at the WW Library

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association
3rd Thurs. 7 p.m. In-person or Zoom
Contact: coordinator@windmillhillpinnacle.org

The Living Earth Action Group most Fridays at 5 p.m. Westminster West Congregational Church
Contact: Caitlin Adair pcdair@sover.net

WVFD Prudential Committee meets on the 3rd Sunday of the month, at 10 a.m. at the Westminster Fire Station.

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE

Editor: Robert F. Smith

Board of Directors:
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Provided by the
Community
westminsternews@gmail.com

Nov. Deadline

The EARLY deadline for the Dec. 2024 Issue of the Westminster Gazette is Wednesday, Nov. 13
Publication Date is Wednesday, Nov. 18

To Contact the Westminster Gazette
E-mail:

westminsternews@gmail.com

24TH ANNUAL FIRE PREVENTION DAY AT WCS

On Oct. 11, members of the Westminster Volunteer Fire Department hosted the 24th annual Fire Prevention Day. The gorgeous fall day was abundant with volunteers from the department as well as other local agencies who provided a wonderful hands-on experience for students exploring the following activities: the smoke room, platform lifts, off road rescue rides, Golden Cross ambulance, the game warden and a K9 unit, sheriff's dept, Smokey Bear, the water hose, and fire equipment try ons.

Thank you to the following people for making this event possible: June Streeter, Chief Cole Streeter, Nick Streeter, Gary Cobb, Caleb Rounds, Austin Taylor, Dan Saccoccio, Ryan Struthers, Jay Gagne, Andrew Mulshuk, Nate Fairbrother, Golden Cross Ambulance members Howard, Tessa, Abby, and Mike, Windham County Deputies Richard Levesque and Sharon Kennedy, and Game Warden David Lockerby.

WCS would like to extend our deepest gratitude to



all members of our community who volunteered their time to who make this amazing event possible and teach our youngsters about safety as well as the importance of knowing and loving where we live.

Feedback from our students:

"The off-road vehicle ride was bumpy, fun, fast!" (4th

grader)

"We got to use the thermal imaging camera and crawl out a window in the smoke room" (4th grader)

"I liked going up in the bucket" (kindergartener)

"I liked going on the wagon" (kindergartener)

"My favorite part was going high up in the platform truck" (1st grader)

"I went on the lift. I was brave." (1st grader)

"I liked the smoke room. I got to jump out the window" (3rd grader)

"I liked the cool police officers and the smoke room" (2nd grader)

"Smokey the Bear and the quad" (2nd grader)

"My favorite part of going to the fire house was being in the ambulance on the stretcher" (5th grader)

"I liked going in the police car" (5th grader)

"My favorite part was the wagon that Madison's dad drove us on" (6th grader)

NOLA SCIACCA NAMED BFUHS STUDENT OF THE MONTH

It is a pleasure to announce that Nola Sciacca has been named the September Elks Student of the Month for Bellows Falls Union High School. Nola, a senior, is the daughter of John and Amy Sciacca of Westminster.

Nola, an extremely bright student, excels in academic analysis and logical thought. She can always be relied on to produce original and creative work. Nola works hard to develop her writing skills in addition to learning an enormous amount of content. Tremendously passionate about learning, she is even more passionate about debating and discussing controversial topics. She is inquisitive, energetic, and always willing to offer her own insights into class activities as she adds a new dimension of depth and insight to class discussions.

Her tremendous enthusiasm and interest in life and the world make her a positive role model for others. She is courteous and respectful to all and works hard to include others in activities. Clearly interested in ac-



ademics, on her own, Nola attended a school board meeting and spoke passionately in support of the Advanced Placement classes and how the curriculum had added value to her life.

She comes to school every day ready to learn and participates in a variety of activities. She has emerged as a leader within the school community and is well re-

spected by her peers and the staff at BFUHS.

Students gravitate toward this courteous and respected young woman. Working to give back, Nola has served as Secretary and President of the Class of 2025 over her four years at BFUHS. In addition to this, she has been treasurer and a valued member of the Student Council.

Nola is looked upon as an honest and dedicated student who is nothing short of a pleasure to have in class. One of the attributes that places Nola above her fellow students is the respect that others have for her. Whether it is the staff at BFUHS, her peers or even parents in the stands at athletic competitions, she is revered as one of the school's finest. A model of the BFUHS Community Standards, Nola represents BFUHS and the community proudly and enthusiastically in school and at events that she attends and participates in.

Clearly deserving of recognition, BFUHS and the Elks are proud to have Nola represent us as a Student of the Month.

WATERSHEDS AND WATERWAYS OF WESTMINSTER

By Rachael Shaw

What is a watershed? I had heard this term many times before I really knew what it meant. Part of what makes it confusing is that it has three different definitions. The most common one refers to the area of land that drains (sheds rain and storm water) into a particular body of water.

This area of land can be thought of as a basin. However, it can also refer to the ridge of higher elevation which divides two such areas of land. And lastly, relating to this second definition, it can symbolize a turning point, or a change of course, as in "a watershed moment in history". These definitions are courtesy of the American Heritage Dictionary, 5th edition.

For the purposes of this article, we will be thinking about a watershed as the area of land that drains into a particular waterway, and secondarily, we can be aware of the ridges which divide these areas. Waterways have always served as our reference points within any area of land, as they are easily recognizable by all, and critical to the well-being of all life.

You could think of the land draining into a vernal pool as a micro watershed, and every body of water, from the smallest pond or brook to the largest river or ocean has a measurable watershed associated with it. Thus, there exist sub-watersheds within watersheds within very large watersheds.

Vermont's land is divided up into four major watersheds (also called drainage basins): the Hudson River Drainage Basin in the southwest corner of the state, the Lake Champlain Drainage Basin in the central west and northwest part of the state, the Lake Memphremagog Drainage Basin in the upper north central portion of the state, and lastly, the Connecticut River Drainage Basin which covers the entire eastern side of the state. The four major watersheds are further divided into 17 smaller watersheds (also known as basins). These 17 basins encompass the entire state of Vermont. Westminster falls within Basin 11, which is titled "West-Williams-Saxtons", and sometimes called "West" for short. Basin 11 includes all or parts of 29 different southeastern Vermont towns!

It's interesting to think of our town in terms of its waterways. According to Marie Caduto, who is a Wa-

tershed Planner for the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, "Westminster is actually a part of four different sub-watersheds! The north drains to the Saxtons River, most of the central area goes into the Connecticut, the southwest corner ends up in Sacketts Brook, and the west side of the ridge goes to Grassy Brook. It is a complex town."

For this short series of articles, I'd like to include some personal stories of the ways Westminster residents have interacted with the various bodies of water over the generations.

I will start with one story which my friend Joanna Crocker shared with me several years ago. Joanna ("Jo") died at age 95 in March of 2024, which means she was one of Westminster's oldest residents, born in 1929. I remember her telling me about one particular day when she was a teenager and was sitting on the bank of the brook (a tributary of the Sacketts Brook) across from the family home on Burnett Road.

She was watching a beaver working on a dam. She heard her father calling for her, and she was appreciating the peace of the moment so much that she didn't want to respond. She was immersed in observing and learning about nature, which was a lifetime passion of hers.

Eventually she pulled herself away from the peaceful scene and walked back to the house. This would have happened sometime in the 1930's or 1940's. Jo's daughter Sheila also reminded me of another story connected to that brook.

Sheila said, "We were wandering over there by the brook, Mom and I, when I was in my teens. The spot in the brook is directly across from the house, down over the pastured hill that now belongs to the neighbors across the street. You can't see the Brook

from the house as the pasture hides it. The previous owner, Mr. Kerr, showed Mom a spot where he kept a glass as he liked to refresh himself from the Brook. Mom showed me the glass about 25 years after he showed her. It was still there." I will try to find out what happened to the glass for the next article...maybe it's still there!

Do you have a memory or story that occurred on or near one of Westminster's many waterways that you would like to share in a future Gazette article? Please email it to westminstervtconservation@gmail.com.

Please note, any secret swimming hole spots are too special to advertise, so locations will be kept vague. Anyone with the will to explore can discover truly unique and amazing spots, but you won't find directions in this series.

Interested in all things nature and conservation? Consider attending a Westminster Conservation Commission meeting. We are currently looking for a couple energetic new members! We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7 p.m., alternating between a Westminster Center and a Westminster West location.

For more information, email us at the address noted above.



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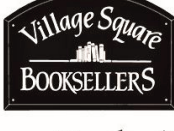


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NOV. BUSINESS OF THE MONTH: MORSE BROOK FARM



Morse Brook Farm is a 207 acre hill farm overlooking the Connecticut River Valley and Mt. Monadnock. We pasture raise sheep (about 100+ lambs per year) and a small number of Dexter cattle. We have a sugar bush and 80 acres of open land. We use Border Collies to manage our sheep and provide several events including sheep herding demonstrations at festivals in the region.

We rotationally graze the sheep and cattle and have been doing targeted management and focused invasive species control to fight back overgrowth. We hope to improve the land, provide food and other goods for our neighbors and coexist with the bountiful diversity of our land.

We have a small farmstand by appointment (look for our announcement about self-serve in the future), participate in the Putney Farmers' Market and work with local businesses and restaurants to provide lamb for their customers. We have most cuts of lamb year-round as well as maple syrup. We offer individual cuts as well as lamb by half and whole. We work with other local businesses to create blankets, sweaters, yarn and pelts from our sheeps' wool.

We welcome your inquiries and hope to see you at the farmer's market or when you stop by to shop in the farmstand. Contact us at: (802) 528-2155, morsebrookfarm.com, or 226 Kurkul Rd. Westminster, VT.

NOV. BUSINESS OF THE MONTH: COTA & COTA



Cota & Cota, is a 3rd generation family business celebrating 83 years. They deliver warmth and home comfort to the community through high-quality fuels, expert hvac service, kind customer service, and philanthropic initiatives. Casey Cota and sister Kelley Cota Tully (*in photo*) enjoy carrying on many of the family traditions and values. Founder Ken Cota believed paying it forward was integral in building a strong community.

As they head into the winter season they share the Gift of Warmth with many. At a few local business holiday events a heartwarming story about Ken is shared along with a drawing where the "winner" gets to "pay it forward" to someone in the community that could really use a donation of fuel. Often kind community members donate matching funds to help customers in need and Cota & Cota partners with the Split the Ticket Fund.

"We really pride ourselves in taking care of our customers like family. You always reach a kind local voice who will listen and fully address any question or concern you may have. Our goal is to provide 24/7 quality service that they deserve. Our highly trained service technicians, master plumbers, delivery drivers, and customer service representatives are the lifeblood of our company. We are very thankful to the community and customers who have helped us reach 83 years."

Wishing everyone a Happy Fall & Happy Thanksgiving. Stay warm!



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