



## Facing Nazis

The personal and historical intermingle in Alex Wolff's new family memoir. See Arts + Leisure.



## Tigers on top

The MUHS girls' basketball team lengthened its streak at OV's expense. See Page 1B.



## Neighbors

The Watershed Center in Bristol learns how to co-habitate with beavers. See Page 13A.

# ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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## Porter doctors take on leadership roles

### Hospital to try a team-based model

By JOHN FLOWERS



BENVENUTO

MIDDLEBURY — Porter Medical Center is adopting a new leadership structure that will invite more physicians input into management of the county's hospital, nursing home and a dozen affiliated provider practices. It's a move that Porter administrators believe will lead to smoother operations and better services for patients.

And PMC's switch from a hierarchical management system to a team-based model will be closely watched by University of Vermont Health Network officials, who could choose to replicate the

new system if it pays dividends for Porter. PMC is an affiliate of UVM Health Network.

Leading the revamp is PMC's top administrator, President Tom Thompson. Prior to his arrival at Porter one year ago, Thompson had worked at other hospitals that possessed a collaborative leadership style with good results.

"The more people we can engage with what we're doing and how we're doing, the better we'll be as a care system," he said during a recent Zoom interview that included PMC Chief Medical (See Porter, Page 14A)

## Local orgs team up to address nurse shortage

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — There's never been a better time for some people to enter the health care field if they live in Addison County.

Helen Porter Rehabilitation & Nursing and the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center are collaborating on a new course offering aspiring Licensed Nursing Assistants (or LNAs) not only free tuition, but also a paycheck while they're studying and a guaranteed job after they graduate. It's called the Licensed Nursing

Assistant Training Program, and enrollment is open through April 1 for the six-week course, which begins April 7. Classes are 3 to 9 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at the career center off Charles Avenue in Middlebury.

On days that students aren't in class, they'll be working at Helen Porter as an "LNA in training," providing support services and gaining experience caring for residents.

Upon successful completion of (See Shortage, Page 12A)



### Ice time

MARY HOGAN ELEMENTARY School kindergartener Andrew Comes gets a little help from a bar while he learns to skate at the Memorial Sports Center rink this past Thursday. Andrew and the other kids in Miss Hurlburt's class, like the other kindergartners, got some exercise and learned new skills. See more photos on Page 11A.

Photo by Cindi Palmer Photography

## Restaurants get COVID relief grants

### 19 restaurants and farms get assistance

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Congregational Church of Middlebury pastor Andy Nagy-Benson knows what it's like to lead a donation drive. Asking folks to give money, even for super-worthy causes, can be challenging — particularly during a pandemic.

But Pastor Andy recently got a chance to give away some money himself — through a new nonprofit cause called Table 21.

In all, 19 ailing restaurants and farms in the Middlebury area (See Table 21, Page 14A)

## Lincoln land preserved for generations

By JOHN FLOWERS

LINCOLN — People traveling up Lincoln's River Road have undoubtedly seen a nondescript dirt pull-off that fronts a gated dirt road. It's right before you get to the Lincoln Community School.

Unbeknownst to many, that dirt road leads to 130-acre jewel of a property strewn with trails, meadows, forestland and what Middlebury Area Land Trust Executive Director Jamie Brookside calls "an incredible." (See Lincoln, Page 12A)



## By the way

Spring brings with it warmer temps, the promise of blooming wildflowers, running maple sap and more hours of daylight. All these great things more than balance out the hour of sleep you will miss this Saturday night when the clocks move forward an hour to kick off Daylight Savings Time. Spring forward!

Another episode of 5-Town Live talent show is scheduled for this Saturday, March 13, from 7-8:45 p.m. This is a low-key, open mic event that's been a huge success, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's been averaging almost 50 viewers per show, and the performances have been an amazing potpourri of local talent. There are probably only a couple more episodes left this (See By the way, Page 9A)

## Bottlenecks hamper growth of meat industry in Vermont

### Key players working to address the shortage of skilled labor

Part 1 of a 2-part series.

By CHRISTOPHER ROSS

ADDISON COUNTY — It's the beginning of the slow season at Vermont's slaughterhouses and meat processing facilities.

The "kill season" starts in September — after a summer of grazing — and runs until January or February.

It's a schedule that goes back for generations in New England. Graze livestock through the summer, process animals in the fall, store and eat meat through

the winter.

This year, however, it's been different.

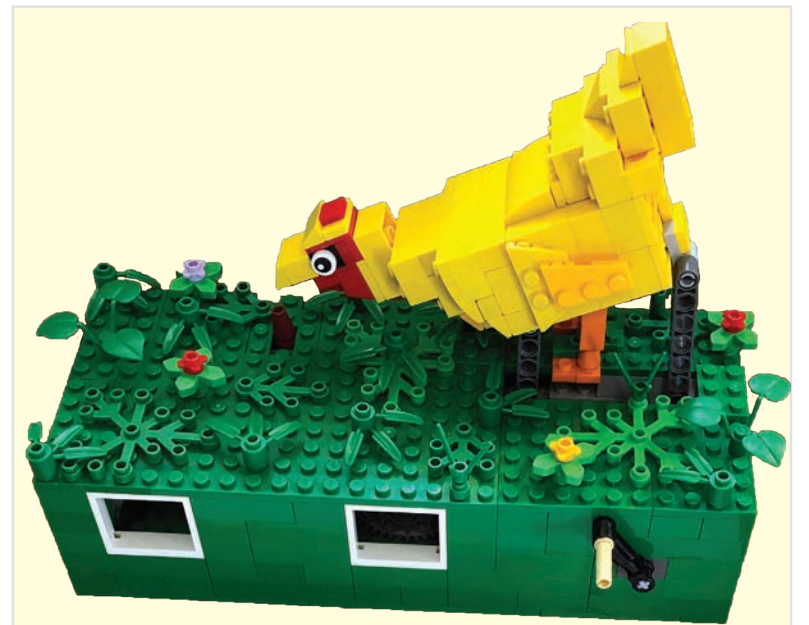
"We do 40 head a week in high season, and we're doing 40 head a week now," said Carl Cushing, owner of Vermont Livestock Slaughter & Processing (VLSP) in Ferrisburgh, a USDA-inspected facility that butchers and processes beef, pork and lamb for local producers.

At the moment VLSP is processing animals that were scheduled six months ago, Cushing said. (See Market, Page 10A)



AGRICOLA FARM IN Panton raises nearly 200 pigs, as well as sheep, ducks and chickens. Last year the business opened a meat processing facility in Middlebury, but, like many Vermont producers, it still struggles finding a qualified slaughterhouse.

Photo courtesy of Agricola Farm



WINNER WINNER, CHICKEN Dinner. Jonathan Kehoe's "Kinetic Chicken," which chases a worm down a hole, was the Grades 6-8 winner in the third annual Lego Competition, sponsored by the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes and the Bixby Library.

Independent photo/Andy Kirkaldy

## LEGO contest spurs young imaginations

By ANDY KIRKALDY

VERGENNES — Zoos, cities, mythical titans, diners, castles and fortresses, a bear and a chicken, a home with an outdoor slide, and a beach-scene reminder of summer greeted Saturday visitors of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Vergennes on Armory Lane.

All 34 of those tabletop creations were made of Legos or pieces related to the plastic building blocks created by Danish toymakers in the mid-20th century.

The occasion was the display of creations, and judging, for the third annual Lego Competition that has been jointly sponsored by the youth club and the city's Bixby Library.

Normally, the entries have been displayed in the Bixby's central lobby under its dome, and the two organizations have held an evening reception for all the creators and their family members.

These being anything but normal times, organizers moved the setup to different rooms in the Armory Lane clubhouse starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday. Contestants and their supporters signed up for four times over the next few hours due to COVID-19 safety protocols.

At 9 a.m., the expert contest judges — Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Executive Director Susan McClure and (See LEGO, Page 16A)

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# Shortage

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the course, graduates receive their LNA licensure and transition into a vacant, full-time LNA role at Helen Porter. They must commit to one year at Helen Porter in return for their free tuition and training.

"We could use at least eight full-time LNAs right now," said Helen Porter Administrator Mary Jane Nottonson. "I'm hopeful this program will attract interested candidates, with the goal of supporting Helen Porter. But an LNA is also a pipeline to other health care careers."

Nottonson noted the career center has historically offered LNA courses through its adult learning curriculum for those seeking an entrée into the health care field. But this is the first time a local health care institution has offered to underwrite the tuition of students who take the course, as well as guarantee a job. "We have already had a favorable working relationship with the career center," Nottonson said. "This is really just a new level to support the need to hire and retain quality individuals."

The promise of full tuition (which usually runs \$1,920, plus \$150 in testing fees) and an hourly wage of \$14 (base pay) during training is a reflection of Helen Porter's need for personnel.

Indeed, there's a nationwide dearth of health care professionals, and the demand has only gotten more acute during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a health care workforce report authored by Laura Q. Pelosi and delivered to the Vermont Legislature in March 2019, the number of new Registered Nurse licenses issued in the state declined by 69% between 2007 and 2014. New LNA licenses declined from around 1,650 in 2003 to around 800 in 2019, according to the report.

Pelosi estimated — based on Board of Nursing Licensing data, hospital budget submissions and surveys — that Vermont would see a demand for 3,909 nursing positions by April of 2020.

"We're a 24/7 operation, so the needs are great," Nottonson said of Helen Porter. "The LNAs provide the bulk of the care here, from a time standpoint."

The nursing home currently employs approximately 60 LNAs — some full-time, some part-time, and some per diem, according to Nottonson. Officials anticipate ongoing vacancies, so a career



MARY JANE NOTTONSON

**"We're a 24/7 operation, so the needs are great. The LNAs provide the bulk of the care here, from a time standpoint."**

— Mary Jane Nottonson of Helen Porter Rehabilitation & Nursing

center pipeline for more workers would be welcome.

Dave Roberts is the Hannaford Career Center's adult education coordinator. He said the new LNA course will ideally carry eight students, and plans call for it to be offered at least one more time this year. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED and be at least 18 years old.

"If it's working, we'll add more classes," he said.

Trainees will learn a lot about anatomy, physiology and general care of the body. They'll be taught how to take vitals and how to monitor patients.

"It's all-around, hands-on care," Roberts said. "Half the class is the book, half the class you're practicing with your peers."

Upon completion of the course, newly minted LNAs will be able to provide direct care to patients, including taking vital signs, as well as bathing, dressing and grooming services.

The new course is likely to attract folks of all ages and walks of life. Helen Porter LNA Ellen Pratt earned her certification during her late 40s.

"This career has been a great fit for me," she said. "I enjoy helping the residents with their daily activities and learning their life stories."

Pratt loves the interaction with patients, most of whom have led full, interesting lives.

"I truly have gained a lot of wisdom and rewards knowing I have helped someone; bringing smiles and laughter to the residents is the greatest reward," she said.

Ultimately, the Licensed Nursing Assistant Training Program could become just the first step toward bigger things in the health care industry.

"We like to say this is an entrance into a career; it's not just getting an LNA," Roberts said.

For more information about the program, check out [tinyurl.com/eartkxd](http://tinyurl.com/eartkxd).

# Lincoln

(Continued from Page 1A)

sweeping view" of Mount Abraham.

"It's breathtaking," she said during a recent interview. "I've been to a lot of incredible places in Vermont, and this is up there."

Owned by Cornwall resident Will Jackson, the property isn't posted and has accumulated fans over the years through word-of-mouth. Bordered by the New Haven River and the Garland Brook, it's been a recreational and educational hotspot for a couple generations of Lincoln school children, who've grown to love it.

Well, the Jackson land is about to get a lot better known to a lot more people.

Jackson is donating the property to the town of Lincoln, which will make it accessible to all, in perpetuity, for walking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and all other non-motorized recreational activities. MALT will take over stewardship of the property, while the town of Lincoln will own and maintain it.

"It's a once-in-a-generation kind of gift," Brookside marveled. "It's special and rare, and brings a lot of us to tears when somebody makes a gift like this."

Jackson is well known in the county for his philanthropy, affinity for land conservation and his long association with Middlebury College (class of 1951).

He donated the 150 acres that make up Middlebury's Wright Park, back in 1982.

In 2102, Jackson gave the college 377 acres in Cornwall, bordering the institution's historic campus. It includes fields, woodlands and wetlands the college can use as a laboratory for environmental field research and other educational purposes.

Before retiring and moving to Cornwall in 1991, Jackson was an investment manager and partner at Brundage, Story & Rose, an investment counsel firm on Wall Street. He served as a Middlebury College trustee for 15 years, and has assisted with many alumni events and fundraising activities.

Jackson acquired the Lincoln parcel more than 30 years ago as a potential business investment.

"I thought it would be a really good site for homes," he explained.

But as the years went by, Jackson and his family became more and more enamored of the property as it was.

"I worked on building the trails; we planted Christmas trees and we'd harvest them with friends," Jackson recalled. "I got to really love the land so much that the idea of developing it kind of left. So I



MIDDLEBURY AREA LAND Trust Programs Coordinator Caleb Basa, left, MALT ECOAmeriCorps Member Naomi Cutler and MALT Executive Director Jamie Brookside check out the Garland Brook portion of the Lincoln property that Will Jackson is donating to the town of Lincoln.

Photo courtesy of MALT

kept on enjoying it."

The family never posted the property, but has never really advertised it either. Hikers in the know have enjoyed it for quite some time, as have hunters.

And now they — along with many others — will be able to enjoy the land in a more official way. Jackson first raised his donation desire last fall. He, MALT, the Lincoln selectboard and the town's conservation commission have been working behind the scenes to finalize the transfer.

Jackson initially considered giving the property to the Lincoln Community School, but ultimately chose the town, due to the school's uncertain fate. LCS has been tentatively targeted for possible closure by the Mount Abraham Unified School District as part of a broader consolidation plan driven by declining enrollment.

One of the trickier points to resolve was whether hunting could continue to coexist with the primary vision for the land of passive recreation. But the parties determined that "education and right kind of messaging" could keep the land open to hunters.

"Many community members use it for that purpose," Brookside said of hunting. "We'll try to use it as an exemplar of those two uses (hiking and hunting) finding synergy, and not being exclusive of each other."

MALT is raising \$15,000 for its Stewardship Endowment Fund, money that will help the organization monitor the property over the long term.

As of this writing, MALT had received \$7,000 in pledges and donations toward the \$15K goal for the Jackson land.

## IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

Brookside is also working with a private donor who's considering a separate substantial gift that would be applied toward basic amenities



PHILANTHROPIST WILL JACKSON is donating this beautiful, 130-acre parcel of land to the town of Lincoln. The property, located off River Road near the Lincoln Community School, will be accessible to the public for hiking, cross country skiing and other passive recreation. The Middlebury Area Land Trust is facilitating the donation and future care of the property.

Photo by Josh Hummel

for the property — such as parking for a handful of vehicles, way-finding signs and an information kiosk.

The Lincoln Conservation Commission will help develop a management plan for the property.

Lincoln Selectman Bill Finger is pleased with the way the deal came together for such a wonderful asset that will be enjoyed by so many.

"It's obviously a fantastic donation," he said. "(The land) is beautiful, and it's so close to the downtown."

And while it's close to the school, it's been a little bit of a challenge for students to get there. Groups of students walk down River Road and over a small bridge to access the parcel — which can be a little scary when one encounters a vehicle on the road.

But that might not be a problem for much longer, according to Brookside.

"It's serendipitous that the town of Lincoln is actively fundraising

and planning for a sidewalk that will be continued from the village to the Lincoln Community School," Brookside said. "The preliminary plans have the sidewalk transition to a shared-use gravel path on around 100 acres of this (Jackson) property. Their vision is to have a pedestrian bridge that goes over the New Haven River to the school, so people from the village and students can access the property without having to walk on the main road, which doesn't have a shoulder or a sidewalk."

This is the first conservation foray MALT has made outside the towns of Middlebury, Ripton and Salisbury.

"It's been a blessing to broaden the reach of our mission and form new relationships," Brookside said. "It's a perfect fit for our size organization and vision for the project."

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# WELLNESS Directory

## Practitioner of the Week

Ron Slabaugh, PhD, MSSW, CBP is a former psychotherapist and family therapist who now practices BodyTalk.



Ron Slabaugh PhD, MSSW, CPD

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