

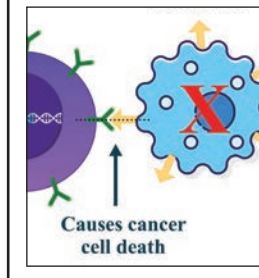
Spirit lift

François Clemmons can't be quiet; he invites folks to hear his singing meditation. See Arts + Leisure.



Playoffs

Running, hitting, scoring. Local high school teams competed in their final matchups. Page 1B.



Cancer facts

Know someone affected by cancer? Our Health & Well-being section tells you more about the disease.

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Meet Miss Vt.: Firefighter Danielle Morse

Whiting woman also serves as a nurse

By CHRISTOPHER ROSS
WHITING — Danielle Morse is about to be the most photographed person in the state.

It comes with the territory. Late last month, just days after earning her bachelor's degree from Castleton University's nursing program, Morse, 22, was chosen as Miss Vermont 2021.

Over the next year, while working as a surgical nurse at Porter Medical Center, she'll be traveling around the state, raising money for University of Vermont Children's Hospital (formerly known as Fletcher Allen Children's Hospital), inspiring young women as the ambassador for the Miss Vermont Scholarship Program, and posing for photographs at civic functions and other special events.

In December she'll travel to Mohegan Sun in Connecticut to compete for the title of Miss America.

For Morse, who grew up in New Haven and now lives in Whiting, this is relatively new. There are no photo albums to commemorate childhood or teenage pageants. But her Miss Vermont story does have a sort of origin photograph. It's unusual in this context, and she has referred to it as "embarrassing."

It depicts a 13-year-old girl recovering from surgery in a low-lit room at Fletcher Allen Children's Hospital. Her arm pokes out from under the blanket just far enough to give a thumbs-up. The photo is grainy and the child looks somewhat weary, but she is obviously Danielle Morse. Just look at the smile.

GRATITUDE

In October 2012, in the middle of the night, Morse was transferred from Porter Hospital to Fletcher Allen Children's (See *Miss Vermont*, Page 13A)



NEW HAVEN NATIVE Danielle Morse was chosen Miss Vermont 2021 last month at the Vergennes Opera House. The 22-year-old, who now lives in Whiting, will spend the year promoting the Miss Vermont Scholarship Organization and the UVM Children's Hospital, to which she feels a very special connection. In December she will compete for the title Miss America.

Independent photo/Christopher Ross

Consolidation plans would close Mt. Abe

But elementary schools would stay

By CHRISTOPHER ROSS

BRISTOL — If the community-authored facilities proposals submitted to the Mount Abraham Unified School District board last month are any indication, the writing is on the wall for the district's high school in Bristol.

Mount Abraham Union High School currently educates students in grades 9-12 from the district's five towns of Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton, New Haven and Starksboro. The 52-year-old building had required numerous

repairs and renovations in recent years, at a cost of millions of dollars.

Since 2014 the district has three times tried to persuade 5-Town residents to support multimillion-dollar renovation bonds, but the community rejected its overtures.

Now, some residents are calling for the school to be decommissioned altogether.

In all four of the community-authored proposals that outline school attendance at the elementary building had required numerous

(See *Mount Abe*, Page 14A)



MALT PROGRAMS COORDINATOR Caleb Basa (in truck) and **MALT board member** Chris Anderson deliver gravel to a wet section of the Trail Around Middlebury. A recent \$100,000 donation will ensure perpetual stewardship of the popular trail.

Photo courtesy of MALT

\$100,000 gift to fund TAM upkeep forever

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury Area Land Trust Executive Director Jamie Brookside is more likely to be found on cloud nine these days than on any of her organization's 4,700 acres of conserved lands.

That's because she and her MALT colleagues have a lot to celebrate. One, she's marking her four-

year anniversary as administrative leader of the nonprofit conservation organization that will soon release a new strategic plan mapping out its priorities through 2025.

And the cherry on top of the sundae: A \$100,000 donation from a local couple that will ensure long-term maintenance of MALT's (See *TAM gift*, Page 16A)



By the way

While there will be no July 4 parade in Bristol for a second summer in a row due to an abundance of COVID-19 precaution, there **WILL** be fireworks. The fireworks will be held on Friday evening, July 2, with a rain date of Monday, July 5. The fireworks will be set off in the same place as usual — the Mount Abraham Union High School sports field — by Northstar Fireworks. Parking will be provided by the Masons, and there will be several food (See *By the way*, Page 16A)

She happily did it her way at Agway

Bearor retires after 50 years at the store

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Fran Bearor has rubbed shoulders with an untold number of people during her half-century as the bookkeeper, manager and jack of all trades at the Agway Farm & Garden store in Middlebury. So talking to people tends to come naturally.

Except last Thursday — and that's only because the person in question was a reporter asking her to say good stuff about herself as she prepared to exit a business to which she has given her entire adult life.

But Bearor, 70, did what she's done for Agway since 1971 — she rose to the occasion and got the job done.

She's always had a mind for math, a yen for the business world, and a desire to be with other people. So she tailored her education accordingly while at Vergennes Union High School, from which she graduated in 1969.

"I took office courses — typing, shorthand, running different machines," she said.

Her first job upon graduating was



FRAN BEAROR WILL retire from Middlebury's Agway Farm & Garden store this month after 50 years at the same job.

Independent photo/Steve James

actually at the old Kerr-McGee fertilizer plant off Meigs Road in the Little City, at the site of the former Feed Commodities barn

that burned in 2018. Kerr-McGee needed a short-term bookkeeper, and Bearor fit the bill, starting in April of 1970.

"It's a terrible story, but the manager there was cutting a drum, it exploded, and he died," Bearor (See *Fran Bearor*, Page 15A)

Midd cop who served the longest is retiring

Sgt. Christopher mentored many

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Middlebury Police Department Sgt. Mike Christopher has had varied assignments during his lengthy career, ranging from minor traffic stops to facing down armed suspects.

But one of his biggest challenges was making a final exit from the Middlebury police headquarters on May 28, after a 35-year career that made him the longest serving officer in the department's history.

"It was kind of tough walking out the door for the last time," Christopher, 64, said during an interview on Monday.

His introduction to the world of law enforcement (See *Christopher*, Page 12A)

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By the way

(Continued from Page 1A)
and other vendors at the Bristol Recreation Department field. At this time, the number and variety of vendors as well as the presence of music is uncertain, according to organizers.

There's a new gallery in town, and you are the artist. It's the "Free Little Art Gallery," and it's located in the garden of Middlebury's Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History at 1 Park St. Anyone can participate by creating a mini work of art in any medium. Bring your art to the Sheldon and place it in the Free Little Art Gallery. If you see a work you like, you are welcome to take it home with you. The Sheldon curators may select pieces from time to time to display in a future mini exhibit. For reference, the scale of the gallery is 1:12 (1 inch equals 1 foot). Keep that in mind as you create your work. Spread the word, tell your friends and family. Stop by often to see what new artwork has arrived.

Vermont Legal Aid is hosting a virtual legal advice clinic by phone for free civil legal assistance to Vermont seniors, age 60 and up, to answer legal questions about COVID-19 related assistance, federal and state benefits, housing, unemployment, or other civil legal issues. The clinic is slated for Thursday, June 24, from 9-11:30 a.m. Book your free 20-minute appointment by calling 1-802-318-4169. Leave a message with your name and number, and the best time to return your call. You can also book an appointment online at vtlawhelp.org/seniors.

As we drive Vermont's roads, we've grown accustomed to keeping an eye out for deer that might cross in our path at any given moment. Well, local environmentalists remind us that this is the time of year when we're likely to see a much smaller and slower animal risk it's life getting from one side of the road to the other: turtles. According to folks with the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project, female snapping and painted turtles are now moving overland in search of open, sunny, lawns, gardens, and road

edges to dig nests and lay their eggs. This will continue for the next month and it provides the easiest time to find and document them. Watch out for them on the roads. You can help them by moving them across the road in the direction they were heading — but always check for traffic first. If the turtle is colorful with red and yellow stripes, it is a painted turtle and you can move it safely. If the turtle has no red, yellow, or orange colors, it is probably a snapping turtle. Snapping turtles are nervous on land and will defend themselves. Keep in mind that their necks can reach just about as far as the length of their shells, so keep your hands out of that area to avoid a serious bite. Small to medium-size snappers can be safely lifted by the back of their shells (head pointed away from you). It is best not to lift a snapper by its tail, as you can do damage to their spine. However, you can slide a large snapper along the ground by grabbing the tail and a hind leg.

The "Lunch 'N Learn" series of **Homeward Bound** (the Humane Society of Addison County) continues with "Raising Guide Dog Puppies" on June 17 at noon. This one-hour Zoom session will be led by Candy Fox, who has fostered three guide dog puppies now happily placed with their people. She will share the rewarding, fun, challenging, and heartbreaking aspects of her experience. This is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required. To sign up, email Hannah Manley at hmanley@homewardboundanimals.org.

Meals on Wheels provides so much more than a meal to seniors and shut-ins. The moment you knock on that door, you make a connection. The friendly visits, safety checks and nutritious meals are a lifeline to many. Now the nonprofit organization Age Well needs Meals on Wheels volunteers in Bridport and other Addison County towns. Time commitment is based on your availability: Deliver once a week or once a month. Delivery is typically from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. For more information, contact Laura Need, at lneed@agewellvt.org or 802-662-5279.

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LONGTIME MALT VOLUNTEER John Derick has maintained TAM boardwalks and mowing for 33 years. The recent gift will help ensure his legacy of caring for the trail is upheld for decades to come.

Photos courtesy of MALT

TAM

(Continued from Page 1A)
 crown jewel: the 19-mile Trail Around Middlebury (TAM).

The donation came in April, just as MALT officials were putting the final touches on the strategic plan.

The gift was pure serendipity, according to Brookside.

"The donors came to us with the offer; we didn't solicit it — which is the Mecca of all holidays for nonprofits," Brookside said with a hearty laugh.

"I cried, I laughed and I yelled," she added, candidly.

Rather than trumpet the news impersonally through a group email, Brookside proceeded to share the good tidings personally with as many MALT colleagues as possible.

It was like chewing a stick of gum that never loses its flavor.

"At least 50% of the people I told were brought to tears," she said. "This kind of gift is unprecedented (for the Trail Around Middlebury)."

The donors want to remain anonymous. But Brookside is able to say they are a couple residing in Addison County, practically on the TAM. They're making the gift in memory of their respective moms — both of whom were avid outdoorspeople, according to Brookside.

"The couple wanted to give to an organization that could make a significant impact, and looked for a smaller one that had an environmentally focused mission," she said.

Since the donors and their dog regularly walk the TAM, it seemed fitting to them that they write their check to MALT.

Brookside said the \$100,000 will be added to MALT's \$275,000 endowment fund, and will yield enough interest to permanently bankroll a full-time, seasonal, trails-maintenance position that will

focus on the TAM. Whoever holds the job will be given such tasks as clearing the trail of debris, cutting back growth and erecting better wayfinding signs.

The new position will finally allow John Derick, an all-star MALT volunteer who's spent more than three decades tending tirelessly to the TAM, to pull back from his duties.

"It's another pivotal step in MALT internalizing the functions of its trails and the TAM, and being able to honor all that John has given to the TAM, and to be able to continue that legacy," Brookside said.

When she joined MALT in 2017, Brookside's TAM supporting cast was pretty much Derick and a summer intern.

This summer, she has four staff and myriad volunteers to help out. And next year, thanks to the \$100,000 contribution, will bring the newly hired TAM-tender.

"We're really making progress," Brookside said. "This (donation) is pivotal."

TAM WISH LIST

As one might imagine, the TAM is a big part of the Land Trust's new strategic plan. The plan recommends that MALT strengthen its current assets into 2025 in order to build



TRAIL FAIRIES LEAVE notes of encouragement for the MALT staff who maintain nearly 30 miles of trail in Addison County.



MALT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Jamie Brookside moves gravel to the Jackson Trail. She says that at MALT everyone pitches in toward a common goal of connecting people with the lands we protect.

a more solid foundation for future growth, according to Brookside.

"We want to focus on making sure the trails we have are well taken care of, that we have all the resources and people we need to do that," she said. At the same time, MALT officials continue to network with landowners about potential future trail extensions.

For example, one of the organization's long-term aspirations is to see the TAM connect with East Middlebury. Around one mile of that trail is currently in place — from East Middlebury village to the Oak Ridge Trail (leading into the Green Mountain National Forest). It's part of MALT's ongoing relationship with the North Country Trail Association.

"The (trail) wish list is long," Brookside said with a smile. "But I feel strongly as leader of MALT that we need to take care of what we have first. It's not a sustainable model to

build and build and build, and not have the foundation underneath it."

MALT's strategic plan relates to what Brookside described as the group's "four core areas of work" — land conservation, stewardship of that conserved land, planning for and maintaining its trail and recreation network, and offering educational programming.

It was Brookside who put MALT's educational programming on the map when she signed on four years ago. And it's proven to be a very successful decision. The organization now offers a variety of youth programming, including afterschool, vacation camps, homeschool programs and summer camps.

"It's grown exponentially and been so well received," Brookside said. "It's been a new way to engage with the community and bring people to our lands and trails. In these next four years, we want to start thinking strategically about who we're engaging, how we're engaging them, and what are the most valuable uses of our resources and time that we have as a staff here at MALT."

Another MALT priority for the coming years: establishing a community science program for land stewardship, through which volunteers would "adopt" various MALT conserved properties, monitor them, and recommend stewardship techniques.

"It's hard for one person to cover 4,700 acres of conserved land," Brookside said of the current challenge.

Monica Pryzperhart is a relatively new member of the MALT board. She's pleased to join the organization at such an exciting time.

She's thrilled with the \$100,000 donation.

"We're so excited this makes our investments in the TAM so much more secure," she said. "I think we're both excited about the possibilities, but I also see this as a testament to how important the TAM is to so many people in our community — particularly during the past year, with COVID. So many of us have realized what an important resource this is in our community."

The strategic plan, according to Pryzperhart, will help MALT understand how its capacity and the community's needs can match up.

It's shaping up as an interesting four years.

"I'm excited to see where this takes us," Brookside said.

