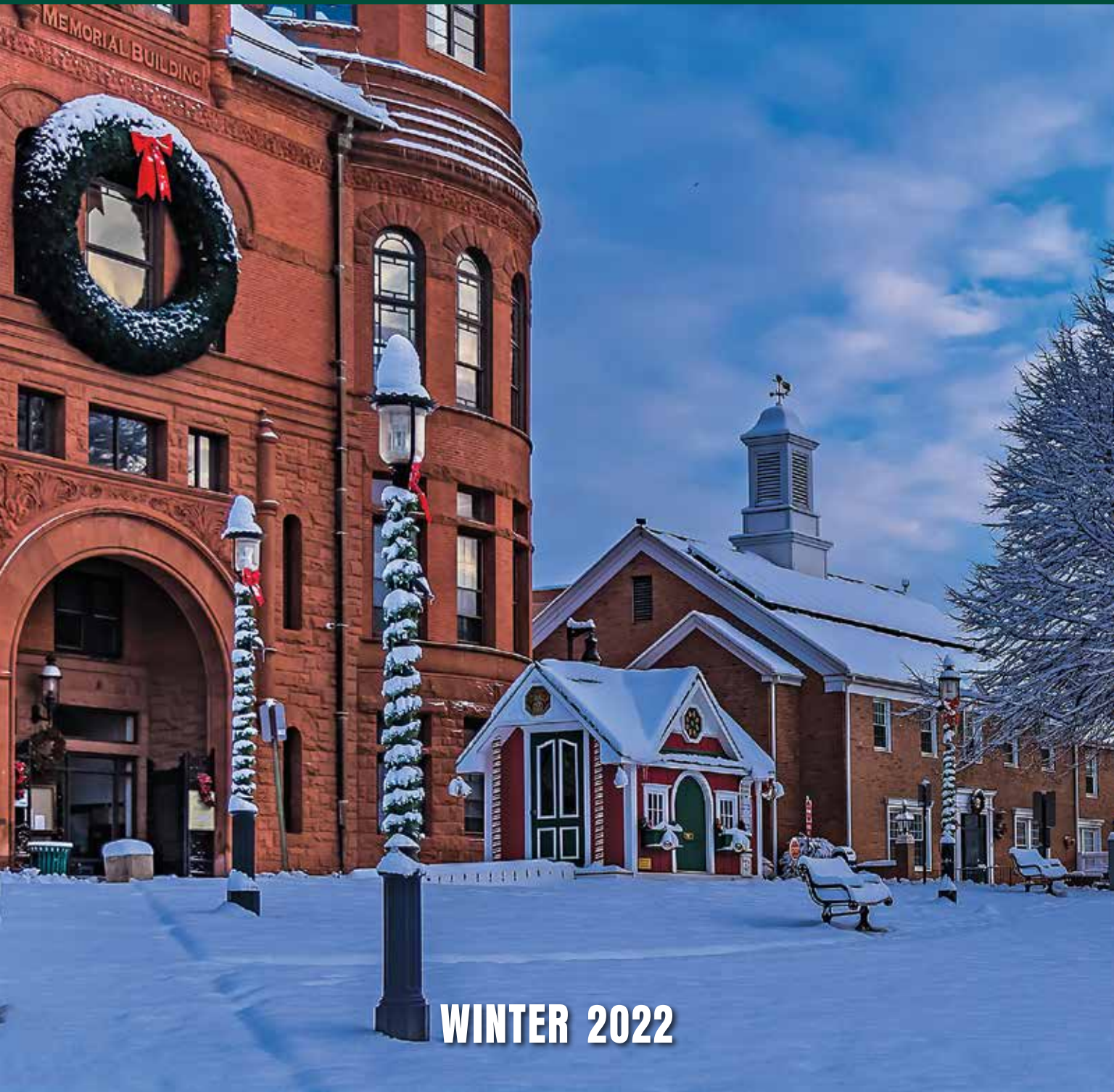




VERNON VOICE



WINTER 2022

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by Tyler Gagnon

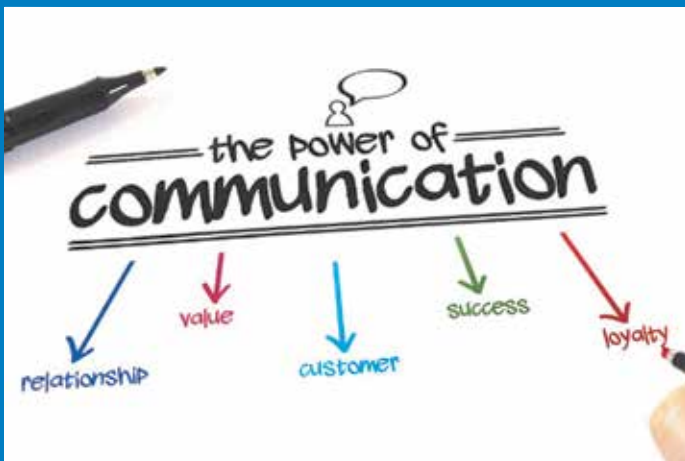


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Dear Friends,

First and foremost let me wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year! Vernon is moving forward and I hope you are pleased with our progress.

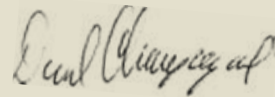
This edition of the Vernon Voice will give you an abundance of information about upcoming programs and events as well as articles that remind you of our deep rooted local history. Our cover, courtesy of Ron Sperry Photography, is a striking photo of our government center and our beloved Santa House. Santa's House has a rich history of families visiting to share their wishes for the Holiday Season and the coming year. The photo also captures the majestic Memorial Building, built in 1889 as a monument to the Civil War Soldiers honoring all their sacrifices. Central Park, located directly in front of town hall and a gathering place for activities year round is also featured.

Our town is also rich in volunteers, however, we have many vacancies that we need to fill. Part of Vernon's charm is everyone is welcome to participate and we are hoping that you will! There are a variety of commissions and boards that need your help. Call the Mayor's Office for information anytime 860-870-3600 or check out the website for options for volunteering. We'd love to have you join us.

COVID-19 continues to interrupt all our lives. We want you to know that the Town of Vernon is working tirelessly to provide valuable vaccination assistance, prevention measures and the most up-to-date information available to assist our residents. Our website vernon-ct.gov is also a good reference for the most up to date information. You can sign up on the home page for ALERT VERNON and we will send you important information updates as they become available. If we can assist you in anyway please let us know.

As we move forward into 2022 let us work together to make Vernon the best and safest town it can be!

Sincerely,



Daniel A. Champagne
Mayor, Town of Vernon



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The Town Clerk's office administers the sale and accounting of sporting licenses for the State of Connecticut. A Connecticut resident or non-resident, 16 or older, can purchase a license to fish, hunt and/or trap in Connecticut from the Town Clerk's office or online at ct.gov/deep. There are no special requirements to get a fishing license, for either inland or marine. People seeking hunting and trapping licenses must pass a hunter conservation course. If you renew your license at least once every five years, no additional training is required.

Any active full-time member of the U.S. armed forces non-resident may purchase a Connecticut hunting,



fishing, or trapping license for the same fees as a resident. Proof of full-time membership during the calendar year must be carried while using the license.

Another privilege is given to our residents who are 65 or older. These individuals may obtain a free license, but it must be renewed each year. A \$5 Trout and Salmon Stamp is required while fishing in certain trout management areas or when keeping trout and/or salmon.

Additionally, special licenses are available to persons with specific disabilities. Please contact the Town Clerk's office or ct.gov/deep for further information.

Most hunting permits such as deer, turkey, migratory bird, archery and trapping can be obtained at the Town Clerk's office and added to the sporting license. Deer/Turkey Harvest Tags are in the Hunting and Trapping Guide book, as well as private land consent forms.

Fishing and hunting licenses for 2022 can be purchased beginning December 1, 2021. Opening day for 2022 trout season in Connecticut is the second Saturday in April. Information is forthcoming on Family Fishing Day and Free Fishing License Days. Come see us to get your sporting license, a re-printed one if the original is lost, and to pick up the new Fishing and Hunting Guides for 2022. We accept cash or checks for payment, and won't ever question your "big fish" story.

Submitted by: Karen Daigle, Town Clerk

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Winterfest

On Friday, December 3rd, the Town of Vernon started the holiday season with the Annual Winterfest, featuring the Firetruck Torchlight Parade, the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus and Lighting of the Tree. Many came out to celebrate the festivities and sing along with the Rockville High School Band. Congratulations to Vernon Fire Truck E-441 and South Windsor Fire Department for winning best decorated trucks.

Arctic Splash

On Saturday, December 4th over 50 people and organizations gathered at Valley Falls with one goal in mind...to run into the water in 30 degree weather. Why you ask? To raise money for our Send-A-Kid Scholarship. Yes, they voluntarily signed up to participate in our annual Arctic Splash event! Special thanks to our sponsors Superior Energy, Mr. Sparkle Car Wash, Olender's and Connecticut Valley Orthodontics. Special thank you to the Vernon Fire Department for their support and help. The event had great support from the Social Services and Youth Services departments, the Vernon Senior Center, Maple Street School and many more! Congratulations to our award winners:

Most Money Donated by a business: Superior Energy

Most Money Donated by an Individual: William Nicholson

Best Individual Costume: Lisa Perrone

Best Team Costume: Vernon Senior Center Plunging Penguins

Most School Spirit: Maple Street School

The Arctic Splash is always held on the first Saturday of December. Make sure to mark your calendars for December 3, 2022!

School Year Programs

After School Club is for students K-5 at each of the elementary schools in Vernon from the end of the school day to 6 p.m. We strive to provide a variety of fun, engaging indoor and outdoor activities to help kids learn, make friends, and have fun after school. Daily Activities include: Homework time, snack, sports and group games, arts and crafts, table activities and special activities. Full details and information are available online.

Vacation Camp is available to children in grades K-5. Let your child have fun with Parks and Recreation during school vacation weeks! Vacation Camps provide a fun place to spend time off from school. Theme days, outdoor time, crafts, games and more! Camp is held 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Vernon Teen Center. Register for individual days or the whole week. Check online to see upcoming offerings.

Beyond Dance Program - From September to December more than 175 dancers gathered at Center 375 each week to learn new dance moves and enhance their skills through the partnership with Beyond Dance. On December 10, a winter showcase was held at Vernon Center Middle School to show all they learned as well as spread holiday cheer. The dancers took over the big stage in the auditorium and put on quite a holiday performance for spectators to enjoy. In January the next cycle starts to gear up for the Spring Showcase. Classes run in monthly sessions. Prices range from \$50-\$60 based on the number of classes. Students of all ages and skill levels are welcome.

Upcoming Winter Programs

New! **ART-ventures** for kids in grades K-5. Come explore original art forms and techniques while sculpting colorful monsters, designing ceramic robots, decorating birdhouses and more. Of course, there will be stories which relate to the works of art. Held on Mondays 4 to 5:30 p.m. beginning from January 24 to March 7 at Center 375. Cost is \$120, which includes all art materials.

New! **Mad Science** for kids in grades K-5. Students will explore inertia, gravity and centripetal force, tension and

See **PROGRAMS**, p. 9

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MD, FACOG

Robert Gildersleeve
MD, FACOG

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Wins Top Award from Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association

Vernon Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Amy Watt was honored recently by the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association with its "2021 Hidden Hero Award."

Watt was recognized for her work overseeing a variety of wildly successful and popular recreation programs during the pandemic, including last year's reimagined Winterfest and a COVID-safe Trunk-or-Treat program. She was also recognized for the critical role she played managing Vernon's nationally recognized COVID-19 vaccination program. Watt and Parks and Recreation Director Marty Sitler oversaw non-medical operations of the program.

When the vaccination program transitioned from mega-clinics at the Vernon Senior Center to smaller clinics focused on serving hard-to-reach communities, including people experiencing homelessness, food insecurity and other challenges, Watt took a leadership role. In partnership with the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, she also led a series of highly-specialized clinics custom tailored to people living with disabilities.

"Amy is highly deserving of this award, which recognizes the incredible work she has done on behalf of the residents of Vernon and beyond," Mayor Dan Champagne. "Amy is a great example of how our staff came together, outside of their regular roles, and did a phenomenal job meeting the needs of our community."

Last year's Winterfest was a huge success because it provided a much-needed diversion for a community that had been dealing with the pandemic and the isolation it caused, Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said.

"Under Amy's leadership, our Parks and Recreation

Department created a program that delighted thousands of pandemic-fatigued families and quite literally backed up traffic to I-84," Purcaro said. "That was an important event for our community and the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive. As important as Amy's work on Winterfest was, her role in leading our vaccination program was even more consequential. Amy and her team literally saved lives."

"This was a big job and it was going to take both of us to do it well," Sitler said. "Amy knows her job and is good at adapting when there are challenges. She brought that to the vaccination program. She quickly figured out what needed to be done, and then adjusted and improved as we moved forward. It was always about doing our best to serve residents."

Watt said she was honored to be recognized by her colleagues, but stressed that she could not have achieved anything without the hard work of her colleagues in Vernon. "Without the leadership of the mayor and town administrator, the commitment of the people with whom I work, and the loving support of my family, this could not have happened," Watt said. "I was fortunate to have the opportunity to lead this tremendous team."

And while the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, Watt said she has come to appreciate the opportunities it presented to serve.

"It was especially rewarding to help people with disabilities receive vaccine," she said. "Some were not able to speak, but the expression on their faces and the gratitude and relief expressed by their loved ones and caregivers really drove home how important our work was to so many people. It was a gift to be able to help so many people."

Submitted by: Dave Owens, *Communications Specialist*

VERNON ANIMAL CONTROL

Vernon Animal Control is staffed by two full-time Animal Control Officers, Craig Segar and Jerold Casida, and one part-time Animal Control Officer, Eric Boucher. The officers are trained and certified to enforce state laws and town ordinances pertaining to animals.

Animal Control Officers respond to complaints involving wildlife and domestic animals. For example, animal control officers routinely investigate complaints of animal abuse, dog bites, roaming dogs, nuisance barking, missing or found animals, and sick or injured animals.

The officers maintain the Animal Control Facility, located at 100 Windsorville Road, Vernon, and care for the animals sheltered there. Animal Control Officers work collaboratively with local veterinarians to ensure the animals in their care receive the highest level of care. In addition, Animal Control has extensive knowledge and access to outside resources, such as state animal control, animal rescue groups and wildlife rehabilitators that assist them when necessary.

Here is contact information for Animal Control:

- **Animal Control Facility:**
860-870-3558
- **Routine animal complaints:**
860-872-9126
- **E-mail:**
animalcontrol@vernon-ct.gov

The Animal Control Officers have a Facebook page, @vernondogpound, on which they post news, information about missing pets and information about animals available for adoption. Check the Facebook page if you are interested in adopting a pet.

Submitted by: Police Chief John Kelley,
Vernon Police

ROCKVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Rockville General Hospital (then, Rockville City Hospital) first opened to an eager and enthusiastic public on November 1, 1921. A local journalist lauded it as, “a cottage hospital splendidly adapted to the needs of our community.” His words would prove both pragmatic and prophetic. The hospital began humbly, with few services, limited equipment and just four nurses. It found its first home in a former residence, with many of the staff actually living there. The boarding house on Prospect Hill was “splendidly adapted” to become the community’s beloved new hospital. But what that young writer couldn’t know at the time was just how much the hospital would continue to adapt for the next 100 years. Perhaps unlike any other hospital, Rockville General Hospital has been shaped by you. Whatever the community has needed, Rockville General has become. Your history and the hospital’s history are one.

It’s interesting that 100 years later, Rockville General is still a cottage hospital in many ways. Still humble. Still intimate. Still operating, at least partially, out of a former residence. And still adapting to the needs of the community. There is so much love for Rockville General



Hospital. Just as it holds a special place in your hearts, it is beloved by all of us in the ECHN family. Hospitals are not buildings, they are people. We sincerely thank you for being a part of Rockville General Hospital’s history. And future.

Submitted by: Bernadette McMahon, *RGH*

Resources That Increase Food Security

CACFP: Child & Adult Care Food Program

Food Pantries: Site-Based and Mobile

WIC: Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Food Program

Pathways to Jobs and Keys to Self-Reliance

Case Management

Access to Employment

Crossroads: Youth Residential Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program



Safe Decent Affordable Housing

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

Affordable Home Ownership Program (AHOP)

Homelessness Prevention: Family, Adults, & Youth

UniteCT Rental Assistance

Affordable Rental Housing

Senior Housing

Emergency Shelter

Supportive Housing for Families

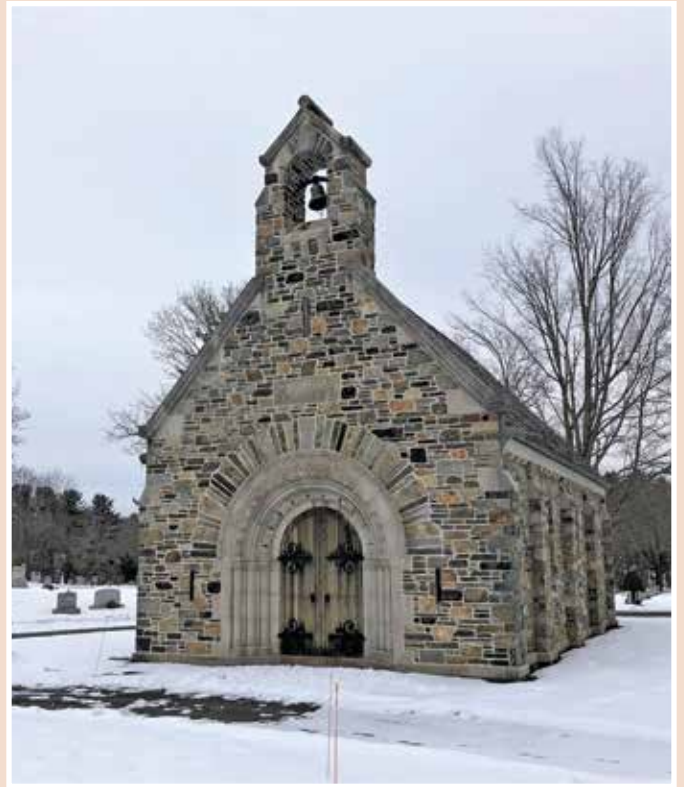
Next Steps Supportive Housing

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Grove Hill Cemetery Walking Tour Brochure

Looking to get outside this winter? Come visit more than 30 acres of history at Grove Hill Cemetery, located off of Grove Street at 22 Cemetery Avenue. The Town of Vernon Cemetery Department in collaboration with The Vernon Historical Society has created a self-guided walking tour of a cemetery. A brochure to guide walkers features 28 monuments and points of interest on the grounds. The tour walks visitors through more than 170 years of history while highlighting the stories of famous war veterans, local mill owners, artists and politicians. Brochures can be found at the main entrance sign next to the office as well as at the Chapel in the center of the cemetery. In addition, the brochure can be accessed on our website.

Grove Hill Cemetery opened in 1847 and remains an active, full-service operating facility today. Grove Hill was initially created to serve the expanding mill village of Rockville and to have a design and layout that exemplified the Victorian ideal of a rural cemetery that evoked feelings of consolation and remembrance. With more than 13,000 burials to date, Grove Hill is one of five cemeteries in town that falls under the care of the Town of Vernon Cemetery Department. Other cemeteries include: Elmwood Cemetery, Valley Falls Cemetery, Southwest Cemetery and the Old Burial Grounds of North Bolton.



Submitted by: Travis Clark, *Superintendent*

Vernon Residents Meet Goal to Purchase New Police Dog

Thanks to the efforts of nearly a hundred residents, business owners, school children and others, the effort to raise money to purchase and train a new K-9 for the Vernon Police Department was incredibly successful. The \$30,000 goal was met just before the Christmas holiday.

The fundraising effort followed the sad and unexpected passing of Vernon Police Department K-9 Thor, an 8-year-old Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix who served with Vernon Police Officer Bryan Sembersky for seven years. Thor died Oct. 16 from medical complications.

The new police dog will complement Tengo, who is 5 1/2 years old and is the remaining K-9 for the Vernon Police Department.

Vernon residents are consistently generous and always supportive of our police department. I am so proud of the people of my hometown and the success of this effort shows exactly how caring a community we are.

Submitted by: Lisa Moody, *Fundraising Chairman*

PROGRAMS, continued from p. 6

compression along with experiments. For a complete lineup visit our website. Held on Wednesdays, 5 to 6 p.m., January 26 through March 2 at Center 375. Cost is \$120.

Code Wiz for kids ages 7-17. Learn to code and have fun!

Babysitter Training Course for Kids ages 11-15. Learn the best ways to keep children safe, including how to manage real-life situations, diapering, feeding and much more. Winter class date to be announced soon.

Over the Hill Basketball (Ages 35+) is on open gym basketball program held on Friday nights at Vernon Center Middle School for Vernon residents. Pre-registration for each session is recommended. Session 1 began in November but a drop-in rate of \$10 is available. Next session begins on February 4th for \$50.

Snowperson/Sculpture Contest is coming! This
See PROGRAMS, p. 14

The Vernon Youth Services Bureau and Vernon ROCKS Coalition are proud to share the recognition of Saher Ashraf, Rockville High School graduate of 2021, and current UCONN student.

Saher Ashraf

Real Talk and Vernon ROCKS Coalition

Since 2019, Saher has been a dedicated member of Real Talk, the youth group of the Vernon ROCKS Coalition. Through her work she has supported the coalition's mission to prevent youth substance use and advocated for her peers, amplifying the work of The Village's substance use prevention program and partner agencies across Vernon and Manchester.

Through Real Talk, Saher has been instrumental in helping fellow teens build resilience and understanding around substance use by offering tools, resources



and guidance to her peers and their families. Recognizing academic stressors as a risk factor connected with substance use, Saher developed resources to support her peers as they navigated the switch to virtual learning during COVID-19.

She also engages school and town administrators to promote the importance of positive mental health across her community and leads an array of community-building activities with the same focus. As a leader with Real Talk, Saher has also aided in multimedia substance use awareness campaigns ranging from social media to billboards to help her community take strides in its prevention efforts.

Submitted by: Michelle Hill, YSB Director

The YSB is currently accepting registrations for the YSB Afterschool Program

The YSB afterschool program located at 9 Elm St. in Vernon offers elementary aged students in grades 1-5 the opportunity to learn, develop and have fun in a setting that is well supervised and well structured. Transportation is provided from Vernon Schools. As part of the program students will:

- Participate in fun activities focused on teamwork, respect, and personal development
- Enjoy Recreational Activities
- Benefit from Homework Support
- Meet new friends
- Enjoy a snack
- Assist in Community Service Projects, And Much More!

The YSB Afterschool Program runs Monday-Thursday from the close of school to 5:00pm. Transportation from school to the YSB is provided for Vernon Public Schools.

Call Youth Services for Registration information
860-870-3557

Submitted by: Michelle Hill, Director YSB

Youth Services Bureau at Rockville High School

Rockville High School Peer Advocates and the Vernon ROCKS Coalition partnered for the annual holiday liquor store bag swap in order to help prevent drinking and driving. The purpose of the activity is to take brown bags from the stores and decorate them with safety messages in order to encourage community members to make good decisions. It also gives us a chance to publicize the mission of our group. The bags are then returned to the stores, just before the holidays, so they can be used when patrons make purchases. The store owners were very happy with the bags and were excited to use them.

Here are some samples of the creative holiday themed prevention messages students came up with! We thank Rockville High students for creating awareness and helping their peers stay safe over the holiday season!

Submitted by: Michelle Hill, Director YSB



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The Vernon Senior Center offers a variety of exercise programs to help you stay fit in the new year. The popular Chair Yoga class is a low impact exercise program offered on Monday afternoons. It's a wonderful way to improve flexibility and reduce stress. The Thursday morning Tai Chi class is a great way to improve balance and agility. Free strength classes are on Thursday afternoons and free balance classes are on Friday afternoons. The strength class is designed to work a variety of muscle groups to build muscular endurance and the balance class will improve muscle strength to reverse age-related balance loss. The Fitness Center is open to members. Trainers from Select Physical Therapy will design a personalized training program to motivate members in keeping their exercise goals. Pricing and class dates are available by contacting the Center 860-870-3680.

The AARP free tax preparation program is available to Vernon Senior Center members and non-members. Tax appointments will be on Fridays, starting February 4, 2022. The tax appointment phone line will be accepting reservations on Mondays and Wednesdays, between 9 a.m. – noon. Vernon Senior Center members may register starting on January 10, 2022 and non-members may register for an appointment starting on January 24, 2022. The tax reservation phone number is 860-896-3835.

A series of college-level lectures are being offered on DVD at the Center. The Great Courses "A Visual Guide to the Universe" covers a variety of fascinating topics with visually stunning images produced by the Hubble Telescope, the Mars Rover, and more. Lectures are held on Friday mornings through February 11, 2022.

Reservations are available for the Alaska Discovery Land and Cruise trip with Collette Vacations for June 21–July 2, 2022. This 12-day trip offers sightseeing to Alaskan ports, a visit to Denali National Park, and a 7-night Princess cruise. A representative from Collette Vacations will be presenting details of the Southern Charm trip to South Carolina and Georgia on February 7, 2022. This tour will explore historic Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA, and beautiful Jekyll Island. Travel dates are: September 11–17, 2022.

The Vernon Senior Center offers a variety of programs and services including: special events, cards and games, educational lectures and classes, creative arts programs, health and wellness programs, a nutritional "Grab and Go" lunch, transportation to shopping and medical appointments, books clubs,

See SENIOR CENTER, p. 18

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Working for the Town of Vernon or Vernon Public Schools May Qualify You For Student Loan Forgiveness

Whether it is assisting in a nationally recognized vaccination program, building roads, teaching children, or working at a park summer camp, it is all about serving the Vernon community. Working full-time in public service can be very gratifying, however not much attention is given to the fact that municipal employees, or those who work for non-profit organizations, may be eligible for federal programs which forgive portions of their student loans. A link regarding **Public Service**

Student Loan Forgiveness can be found on the Town of Vernon website, www.vernon-ct.gov, under Human Resources.

Both the Town of Vernon and Vernon Public Schools have various employment opportunities available throughout the year. While you are checking out information on our Human Resources web page, please look at our Employment Opportunities. Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season and a happy new year.

Submitted by: Dawn Maselek, *Assistant Town Administrator*

VERNON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Built in 1879 at the corner of Elm Street and Park Place, the Citizens Block exemplified the evolution of Rockville from a mill village into a factory city. Simpler wooden buildings were replaced by brick and stone structures that optimistically reflected prosperity and permanence. Built with elements of the Italianate style, the new three-story building was named in honor of the citizens of Rockville. The first floor was divided into four sections designated for use as stores. Each store front had a large plate glass window. Brightly painted cast iron columns decorated the exterior corners. A central entrance connected to a staircase to the second and third floors. Space on the upper floors was designed for offices and apartments. Multi-story buildings like this were suitable for

an urban landscape, because they offered pedestrians a variety of businesses, services and residences in a single structure.

Soon after the building was opened in July, the Sills Brothers Drug Store moved into a storefront. Next the Rockville Post Office was relocated to the building. The

new space was 17 ½ feet by 40 feet, an improvement from the old post office which measured 19 feet by 29 feet. Inside visitors found windows for stamps, general delivery and money orders. One hundred and five post office boxes were installed in the new post office.

Over the years the Citizens Block was home to a variety of businesses, including an A&P grocery store, a tailor's shop, lawyers' offices, apartments, and an S&H Green stamp store. More recently, the Rockville Downtown Association had it's office on the first floor.

In October 2021 ground was broken for Phase 2 to preserve the historical structure. A new

entrance and elevator will soon be added and the rear of the building will be stabilized to undo water damage. The restored building will house the regional probate court and town departments such as planning, zoning, engineering, economic development and youth services. When the renovations are complete the community room will also be available for public use.

Soon the restored Citizens Block will again serve as a focal point for downtown Rockville.

Submitted by: Jean Luddy, *VHS Member*



Vernon Social Services has a number of programs, underway now and more coming in the near future, to assist individuals:

Energy Assistance

This is a federally funded program that helps low to moderate income residents with heating costs during the winter months. Residents can call to get information about documents needed to complete the application process. Documents continue to be accepted for both deliverable fuel (oil) heated households and for utility (gas and electric) heated households.

Tax Assistance

Basic tax preparation assistance is provided to income-qualifying individuals or families during tax season, January through the filing deadline. This is primarily done by VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) at the department's offices. Please call 860-870-3661 for assistance.

Camp

In partnership with the Vernon Parks and Recreation Department, "Camperships" are provided to income-

eligible residents. Camp ConnRI is The Salvation Army overnight camp for children ages 7-12. The camp is located in Ashford and offers a variety of activities such as swimming, boating, sports and arts & crafts. Beginning in February, residents can call for information on how to complete an application and determine eligibility. Donations are also accepted to help send kids to camp.

Renter's Rebate

State law provides a reimbursement program for renters who are elderly or totally disabled, and whose incomes do not exceed certain limits. Persons renting an apartment or room, or living in cooperative housing or a mobile home may be eligible for this program. The renters' rebate amount is based on a graduated income scale and the amount of rent and utility payments (excluding telephone) made in the calendar year prior to the year in which the renter applies. If you are a renter age 65 plus or a person receiving Social Security Disability benefits and reside in Vernon, you may be eligible for a rebate. Please call for information. The program begins in April and runs through September.

Submitted by: Matthew Hellman, *Director*

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Rockville High School Agricultural Science and Technology Education's (ASTE's) Livestock Evaluation Teams

The Rockville High School ASTE's Livestock Evaluation Team placed first during the Fall FFA Career Development Event Competition held in November at UCONN. The team consisted of seniors Savannah Battles, Abigail Griffin, Bridget Scanlon and junior James West. These students prepared by learning industry breed standards for beef cattle, sheep and hogs as well as livestock management practices for these species. The team also strengthened its skills in livestock animal evaluation and public speaking during the judging and oral reasons component of the competition. In total, nine teams from other ASTE centers from Connecticut competed in the event. Rockville had two top 10 individuals with Savannah Battles taking second overall and James West placing ninth. The team will travel to the

National FFA Convention in October 2022 to represent Connecticut and compete against the other state winning teams from across the country. Congratulations to this well deserving group of students!

In addition to the Livestock Evaluation team, Rockville ASTE also had students competing on the Floriculture, Milk Products & Quality, Meats Evaluation, and Poultry Evaluation Career Development teams. These teams also placed in the top 10 and each had top 10 individuals in the state. Junior Troy Balsewicz placed third while Lily Hollworth, also a junior, took seventh overall in the state for Floriculture with the team placing third. Other members of the Floriculture team were sophomores Abigail Harlow and Katie Ross.

Our Meats Evaluation team placed

fifth with Sydney Ingraham placing sixth and William DesRocher earning ninth overall. Both students are freshmen in the ASTE program. Senior Victoria McCarthy also competed on the Meats Evaluation team. Senior Violet Hill-Calvert earned 10th overall for Poultry Evaluation with the team placing sixth. The team included junior Zoe Munson, senior Hasseeb Khan and freshman Lorelei Hutchings. Rounding out Rockville's Career Development teams was the Milk Quality & Products team, which earned third place with sophomore Olivia McFarlane placing seventh overall. Juniors Claire Zess and Jaclyn Pehrson and sophomore Olivia Clemons were also team members.

Congratulations to this well deserving group of students.

Submitted by: Ericka Bahler, *RHS ASTE Teacher*



More fires happen in the winter months than any other time of the year. During the cold months, we spend more time indoors and use different methods to heat our homes.

It is important to keep fire safety in mind when you are heating your home.

If you are using a portable heater:

- Make sure the heater has an automatic shut-off so if it tips over, it shuts off.
- Keep anything that can burn such as bedding, clothing and curtains at least 3 feet from the heater.
- Plug portable heaters directly into wall outlets. Never use an extension cord or power strip.
- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.

If you are using a fireplace:

- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out and starting a fire.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.

PROGRAMS, continued from p. 9

contest is held on the Vernon Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page. Look for our Facebook posting in January and upload your picture by February 28. Winners will be announced in March!

Info Coming Soon...keep an eye out on our website for more exciting programs like **Community Gardens, Preschool Fitness, Sports Nutz, Teen Center and more...**

Rentals

Looking for gym space or a room to host a meeting or party, then consider Center 375 (375 Hartford Turnpike). The Community Room holds up to 75 people which includes some tables and chairs, pool tables, air hockey, foosball and arcade games. Center 375 also has a gymnasium with a full basketball court available. Both the room and gym are available to rent on evenings and weekends. Visit our website for pricing and the rental form.

Submitted by: Amy Watt, Assistant Director

- Before you go to sleep or leave your home put the fire out completely.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid. Store the container outside at least 3 feet from your home.

If you are using a wood stove:

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from the stove.
- Do not burn paper in your wood stove.
- Before you go to sleep or leave your home, put the fire out completely.

When heating your home, you need to be aware of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide, also known as CO, is called the "invisible killer" because it's a colorless, odorless, and poisonous gas. More than 150 people in the U.S. die every year from accidental CO poisoning from generators or fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, stoves, water heaters and fire places. Breathing CO at high levels can kill you.

Put CO alarms inside your home to provide an early warning of increasing CO levels. These alarms should be placed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.

As always, make sure you have a smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Test your alarms every month. Have a home fire escape plan and practice your plan at least twice a year. Make sure everyone knows how to escape your home if there is a fire.

Facts about home heating fires

- From 2013-2015, an average of 45,900 home heating fires occurred in the United States each year. These fires caused an annual average of approximately 205 deaths, 725 injuries and \$506 million in property loss.
- Heating was the second leading cause of home fires after cooking.
- Home heating fires peaked in the early evening hours between 5 and 9 p.m. with the highest peak between 6 and 8 p.m. This four-hour period accounted for 29 percent of all home heating fires.
- Home heating fires peaked in January (21 percent) and declined to the lowest point from June to August.
- Confined fires – fires confined to chimneys, flues or fuel burners – accounted for 75 percent of home heating fires.
- Twenty-nine percent of the nonconfined home heating fires – fires that spread past the object of origin – happened because the heat source (like a space heater or fire place) was too close to things that can burn.

Source: Heating Fires in Residential Buildings (2013-2015) PDF 713 KB

General Info

The primary responsibility for keeping Vernon streets open and the transportation network alive during winter storms rests with the Town of Vernon Public Works Department. The State Department of Transportation takes care of the state roads (generally any road with a route number) and can be reached at 860-875-4993. The State DOT is responsible for the following routes in Vernon:

RT 30 - Hyde Avenue, Hartford Turnpike

RT 31 - Grove Street, Reservoir Road, Mile Hill Road

RT 74 - Tolland Avenue, East Main Street, Union Street, Windsor Avenue, Windsorville Rd

RT 83 - Talcottville Road, West Road (parts of Hartford Turnpike & Windsor Avenue)

RT 527 - West Street

RT 533 - Tunnel Road, Lake Street (from Tunnel Road to Bolton town line)

RT 541 - South Frontage Road

RT 542 - Whitney T. Ferguson Road

When winter precipitation starts, the Town of Vernon Public Works Department dispatches trucks throughout the Town to plow, lay salt and sand over 26 separate plow routes. Within each plow route, certain streets are designated as primary streets to be "opened up" first so that all areas of the Town can be reached by snow removal crews and emergency vehicles. Secondary streets are then opened. This means that one or two passes will be made so that the road is open for traffic. Residents can help by parking vehicles off the street at all times during the winter months.

After all streets are opened, the drivers will begin to "widen out"

so that the maximum width of the traveled way will be usable. Widening out may require four or more additional passes to move the accumulated snow to the gutter line. Cul-de-sac residents are encouraged to be patient with the removal of snow from these areas as large snow removal equipment cannot appropriately clear the entire area and alternate equipment may then be utilized when the storm subsides. The plow operator has little choice as to where the snow will be deposited; many times the snow will be deposited into driveway openings.

It is suggested that when clearing your driveway you shovel the snow to the right when facing the street, this way what you have shoveled will not be deposited in your driveway by the plow. The parking ban may be enforced by the Chief of Police if the storm warrants it.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks must be cleared of all ice and snow within eight hours of the end of the storm, or eight hours after sunrise if the storm ended during the night. When plowing or clearing driveways and sidewalks, snow may not be deposited onto roadways. Plowing contractors and homeowners should take notice that violators may be subject to a fine of up to \$50 for each offense. Our department has free sand available to residents for use only on sidewalks. Call the Public Works Office at 860-870-3500 for the locations.

Mailboxes

While plow truck drivers make every effort to avoid mailboxes, they do, on occasion, hit or knock one over. Operators must report these incidents to their supervisor. It is also possible that mailboxes can be knocked over by heavy snow without the operator's knowledge.

It is the Town's policy to replace a mailbox struck by a Town vehicle

if the mailbox was mounted on a sturdy post and located according to U.S. Postal Service standards. Once it has been determined that the Town is at fault, the mailbox will be replaced with either a plain white or black regulation mailbox and a pressure-treated post (if applicable). Under some weather conditions a temporary mailbox may be utilized until a permanent post can be installed. The post office will not deliver mail until the mailbox is replaced. These standards are summarized as follows:

- The box should be 42" from ground level to the bottom of the box.
- The face of the box should be flush with the back of the curb or set back 6 - 12 inches from the edge of the road.
- All mailboxes should have a handle, a flag, and the house number on the right hand side as you face it from the street.
- Residents must keep the approach to their mailbox clear of obstructions to allow safe access for delivery. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the Postmaster may withdraw delivery service.
- Curbside mailboxes must be placed to allow safe and convenient delivery by carriers without leaving their vehicles.

Fire Hydrants

Owners of property and occupants of buildings that have a fire hydrant are required by Town Ordinance to clear a 4-foot area in all directions around the hydrant and a 3-foot wide path from the street to the fire hydrant. Failure to comply with this ordinance may result in a fine. The Fire Department counts on hydrants being cleared of snow to help protect you and your property.

See SNOW, p. 17

Vernon's Buy Local campaign began with a soft launch this fall, went into high gear during the holidays and is snowballing this winter as more businesses tap the free promotional resources that are available and more Vernon residents become aware of just how important it is to spend more of their hard-earned dollars locally.

"As the campaign momentum builds, so do the direct and indirect benefits to our economy and local business community," said Shaun Gately, Vernon's Economic Development Coordinator. "Buying Local is about much more than retail shopping. It is also using local contractors, mechanics, landscapers, attorneys, and so on. Spending locally keeps those dollars cycling through our local economy, which creates more local jobs and a stronger business community."

"Vernon businesses invest in the local economy, create and sustain jobs, pay local taxes, help community residents, and donate to area non-profits," said Gayle Klim of Vernon-based KK&C Attorneys. "Buying local is a win for everyone, and the new campaign materials are a great way to spread the word. We've been sharing the social media graphics on our Facebook and Google My Business pages."

Jess Matson of Swiss Cleaners and Uniform Services

said the focus on buying local is good for businesses, especially as they work to recover from the pandemic.

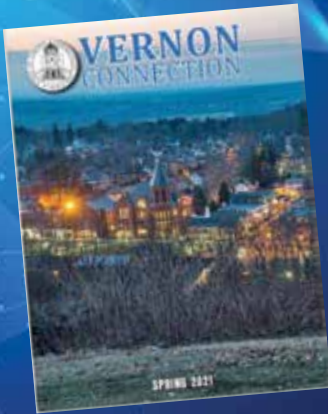
"It's the local businesses that pour resources back into the community to keep it strong," she said. "When you shop local, you are supporting local families and helping them achieve their goals. When you see the shop local sticker, remember that doing so helps families thrive."

Melissa Smith, Executive Director of the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce, said the "Victory for Vernon" Buy Local campaign urges local residents to remember, appreciate and buy from businesses in their hometown, and that's essential to sustaining a healthy local economy."

The Vernon Economic Development Department has available free promotional materials for Vernon businesses and residents who want to help the campaign grow. These materials include business cards, window clings, posters and a series of year-round and seasonal digital graphics that can be used on websites, in emails and on social media. To learn more, please contact Shaun Gately at 860-870-3637.

The core component of the campaign is www.VernonBusinessDirectory.com, where local businesses can submit and update free listings, and residents can conveniently search for local businesses that offer the products and services they need or want.

Submitted by: Drew Crandall



**BUSINESSES
DON'T MISS OUT
ON THE NEXT
VERNON
PUBLICATION**

Publication Date: April 15
Deadline: March 15

**Your ad will be mailed
to 15,000 homes in Vernon
plus the Town Hall!**

Looking to reach new markets?
The Chronicle also publishes Town Books in Tolland, Mansfield, Coventry, Columbia, East Windsor, Colchester, and Brooklyn.

**Contact the Chronicle at
860-423-8466 ext 3305
jeanb@thechronicle.com**

COLLECTOR OF REVENUE

Notice to the taxpayers of the Town of Vernon that the second installment of Personal Property and Real Estate as well as Supplemental Motor Vehicle tax bills on the Grand List of October 1, 2020 will become due and payable on January 1, 2022.

February 1, 2022 is the last day to pay these taxes to avoid penalty interest. Per State Statute 12-145 interest of 1½% per month from the due date, January 1, 2022, with a minimum charge of \$2.00 will be applied to all delinquent bills.

Payments may be made online at www.vernon-ct.gov. Select "Tax Payments" from the home page. For Convenience, payments by Electronic Check are FREE of charge. Payments are accepted at the Tax Office, 8 Park Place, Vernon Connecticut. Office hours are Monday through Wednesday 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 1:00p.m. Tax payments may also be mailed to P.O. Box 387, Vernon CT.

Submitted by: Terry Hjarne, Collector

Vernon Public Schools participated in the First Lego League Challenge Program again this fall. Vernon sent seven teams to the regional competition held at Tolland High School on November 20. Two of our Vernon school teams – Center Road’s Roadrunner Robotics and Northeast School’s Roaring Robotics – received Golden Tickets and moved on to the State competition in Glastonbury in December. Lake Street School’s Code Crackers also performed well and received third place for Robot Design and 8th place overall. And, the Roadrunners received second place in Core Values, which is the benchmark for how the teams demonstrate Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork, and Fun.

This year’s challenge, CARGO CONNECT, focused on the logistics of delivering cargo. Students and coaches worked on coding their EV3 robots to maneuver different

types of cargo on a Lego mission field that represented various forms of transportation (trucks, trains, helicopters, boats) and target areas such as shipping docks, airports, homes, and businesses.

As more demands are placed on transportation systems, we will continue to face challenges unless we find new ways, or improve existing ways, to transport products from place to place. In addition to coding the robots to autonomously move in the field, teams had to identify a problem and solution around the topic of transportation. Students researched their selected issue or problem and created Innovation Projects and prepared presentations about their recommended improvements to equipment, technology, or methods for moving cargo.

Northeast School’s Roaring Robotics team created an Innovation Project about improving cargo train transportation - using trains rather than large tractor trailers

for long distance hauling will have a positive impact on our environment by reducing carbon emissions significantly. Center Road’s Roadrunners Robotics Innovation Project this year was Sea Port Automation. The news coming from the California ports focused them on how to improve the efficiency of unloading cargo containers to help ease the congestions. Feedback from an Amazon Automation Engineer settled the team on a spiral conveyor system to increase unloading of the containers from the top of the cargo ships to the ground, coupled with an additional conveyors and automated sorting at the warehouse.

It has been a great season and students and coaches were very excited to participate in an in-person event. We are already looking forward to next year and making plans for a new challenge.

Submitted by: Regina Lee, *VPS Gifted and Talented Teacher*

Rockville High School Creative Writers

Over the past 20 years, the Rockville High School Creative Writers, under the direction of teacher Victoria Nordlund, have accumulated countless writing awards, opportunities, scholarships and publishing of articles. So far, this year has been no exception. And, for the first time, third-year students in the program can receive Eastern Connecticut State University English credit for the Rockville High School course.

As another first, Rockville seniors Cali Miville and Kaylin Maher were selected for the honor of serving as the 2021-2022 Youth Poet Laureates for the town of Vernon. Their duties will include performing readings of their work, participating in and assisting with library programs and events, and compiling poetry recommendation lists to be highlighted via book displays and the library’s social media. Cali and Kaylin are also co-editors of the 2022 RHS Literary Magazine

This semester students have been learning from professional writers who have shared their extensive writing experiences and expert advice. Novelist Bonnie Hennessey recently shared tips on writing and revising fantasy novels. Sophia Chapadjiev, a playwright and

education director from the Eugene O’Neill Theater, gave a craft talk on formatting and constructing monologues. Poet and nonfiction author Barbara Greenbaum ran a personal narrative workshop. And finally, Kristi Peterson Schoonover, the editor of 34 Orchard Journal, spoke on revision and publishing.

In addition, the Rockville High School Creative Writers have been engaging in authentic learning experiences. They have performed for audiences throughout the state including at the Connecticut Literary Festival at Real Art Ways in Hartford and at the Vernon Arts Center. The group also worked with the Vernon Historical Society on a documentary film about soldiers from Vernon who served in World War II, reading and recording letters that the soldiers had written to family and loved ones at home. In 2021, the students were a part of the “Ekphrastic Extravaganza,” an exhibit at Arts Center East that paired the students’ poetry with accompanying works of art. Furthermore, RHS Creative Writers participated in field trips to the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Mark Twain House to produce works inspired by the museum’s content. In December, the writers will be creating holiday cards

See WRITERS, p. 18

SPRING 2022 @ JORGENSEN



JANUARY

23 DANIEL TIGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD LIVE!

FEBRUARY

3 COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

8 UCONN SFA FACULTY SHOWCASE:
INNOVATIONS - MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS14 POLISH WIENIAWSKI
PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA*19 A TRIBUTE TO ARETHA FRANKLIN:
THE QUEEN OF SOUL

22 CIRCA

26 GARTH FAGAN DANCE

*Also available via livestream

Visit jorgensen.uconn.edu
for full list of spring events

Pictured: A Tribute to Aretha Franklin:
The Queen of Soul

On the UConn campus in Storrs. @JorgensenUConn
jorgensen.uconn.edu | 860.486.4226

Note: all artists, events, dates, programs and
COVID-19 policies are subject to change.



Student Presentations at Vernon Board of Education Meetings

Have you been to a Vernon Board of Education Meeting lately? At every meeting, students from the Vernon Public Schools have been sharing what they have been learning at school. Some of the recent presentations have included fifth grade students from Lake Street School performing a Ghanaian folk song/game called "Sansa Kroma" while demonstrating the strong and weak beats and dynamic changes in music, grade 6 social studies students presenting on projects they created using the inquiry process, Center Road School Kindergarten students modeling their morning message routine, and Maple Street School students in grades K and 1 sharing how they are becoming fluent readers.

Board of Education Meetings are held the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month at the Vernon Board of Education building located at 30 Park Street (3rd Floor Conference Room) beginning at 7 p.m. Please join us and learn what our Vernon students are doing!

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph Macary, *Superintendent*

WRITERS, continued from p. 17

to spread cheer to seniors at the Pitkat Congregate Living Center.

As they progress through the year, students are preparing to submit their work to various contests such as the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, the Connecticut Student Writer Competition, Fresh Voices Poetry Contest, and Eugene O'Neill Playwriting Competition. With a record number of submissions, the creative writers are gearing up for a big year!

Submitted by: Victoria Nordlund, *RHS Creative Writing Teacher*

SENIOR CENTER, continued from p. 11

support groups and more. For information please call 860-870-3680, or visit the website: <https://www.vernon-ct.gov/departments-services/senior-center>, or Facebook page: "Vernon Senior Center at Bolton Road."

Membership to the Vernon Senior Center is easy. New members are required to complete a Membership Information Sheet and submit it with a lifetime membership fee of \$10 for Vernon residents or \$15 for Non-Vernon residents.

Submitted by: Cynthia Maheu, *Administrative Assistant*

Friends Of Valley Falls (FVF) And Vernon Parks & Recreation Collaborate To Manage The Fields At Valley Falls Park

Did you notice the lush grasses and abundance of wildflowers in the meadows at Valley Falls Park this past summer? This enjoyable vista was due, in part, to more rain than usual, but also to a collaborative project between the Friends of Valley Falls and the Parks & Recreation Department to control growth in the Valley Falls Park fields.

The fields at Valley Falls Park are typical of abandoned farmlands found throughout New England. In 1850, Anson Lyman cleared the wooded land at Valley Falls to grow crops. For the next 100 years, the open farmland produced corn, hay and oats. Today only about 50% of the once-cultivated fields within the Valley Falls Park area remain as open meadowland. Unless they are managed to retain their current state, the fields will evolve back to wooded land, and the wildlife diversity they support will disappear. That diversity includes many reptiles, mammals, insects and birds, including ground



Nesting Bluebirds in Valley Falls Park.
Photo by Tom Ouellette

nesting songbirds.

Best practices for field management include mowing at the optimum time of year to avoid injuring wildlife, selective mowing in the field perimeters to retain shrubs valuable to wildlife, and removing invasive plant species. A project team was put together from the Friends of Valley Falls and the Parks & Recreation

staff to create and implement a management plan for the fields. The three volunteer team members from the Friends were also prior chairmen of the Vernon Conservation Commission - Tom Ouellette, Sheryl McMullen, and Ann Letendre. They worked with Marty Sitler, Parks & Recreation Director, Mark Lucas, Park Maintenance Crew Leader, and Dave Turkington, Seasonal Maintainer.

The team, advised by Jane Seymour, a Wildlife Biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), documented grass and wildflower species in the fields, identified and removed invasive plants, selectively mowed at the optimum time of year, and drafted a management plan to guide future maintenance of the fields.

Thanks to the volunteer efforts of the Friends, the expert guidance from Jane Seymour, and the great co-operation from Vernon Parks & Recreation Department, the meadows will continue to support the beautiful and important natural resources in Valley Falls Park.

Submitted by: Ann Letendre, *Member FVF*

SNOW, continued from p. 15

Catch Basins

Help minimize street flooding by shoveling snow and ice from in front of the catch basin nearest your house. This includes keeping catch basin grates free of leaves and other debris all year long!

Basketball Hoops & Poles

The Town will not be responsible for basketball hoops and poles placed on town property, either at the edge of the road or on a cul-de-sac. Basketball hoops or poles damaged by town vehicles, especially during removal of refuse, recycling, snow, slush, etc. will not be repaired or

replaced. These items should be placed on private property.

Refuse & Recycling Collection

- Have your cart(s) at the curb by 6 a.m. on your scheduled collection day.
- Face the lid opening toward the street - handle toward the house.
- Leave 3 feet between each cart or place cart(s) on either side of driveway.
- During winter months, please keep cart(s) clear of snow, snow banks, parked cars, and other obstructions. Check

website (www.vernon-ct.gov) to determine if there are any changes to the collection schedule.

Ash Disposal

Under no circumstances are ashes to be disposed of in the refuse and recycling cart(s). Wood ash retains enough heat to ignite other combustible materials for several days. Sparking embers are a fire hazard. There is a designated container located at the Public Works Garages at 375 Hartford Turnpike.

Submitted by: Dwight Ryniewicz, *Director*

Adult Programs

Magical Window Stars – Create a beautiful star out of kite paper January 26 at 4:30 p.m. – In-Person program. Please register. Also available as a Take and Make.

Solutions for Better Heart Health via Zoom – January 19th at 4 p.m. Register to receive Zoom link. Join us for this fun and informative program where we will learn a total approach to improve our heart health. There are many benefits of adopting a heart healthy lifestyle including increased energy, decreased stress, improved cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and decreased risk of heart disease.

Yoga for all ages – Saturdays at 10:30 a.m. from January 29th – March 5th. Please register.

Spiral Paper Flower Heart – February 8th at 4:30 p.m. as In-Person program. Please register. Also available as a Take and Make.

Connecticut Icons with author, Charles Monogan Thursday, February 17th at 6 p.m.

In Connecticut Icons, Monogan describes the natural wonders, man-made landmarks, familiar haunts and even the native products and foods that express the tone and character of the Nutmeg state. Join us and expand your knowledge of why the state of Connecticut is special and unique! His book will be available for purchase.

Button Flowers – March 8th at 4:30 p.m. as In-Person program. Please register. Also available as a Take and Make.

The Mechanical Banks of the J.E. Stevens Company Thursday, March 24th at 6 p.m. This CT company made these popular banks that were all the rage from the time of the American Civil War to WW II. Come learn more and see a display of banks.

Children's Programs & Events:

Feb. 5, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Take Your Child to the Library Day Event. Get a free book bag and make a fancy bookmark.

Feb. 1-18 - Ongoing - Write a Six Word Story. Compose your work on our genre cards and add it to our writing display. Available as a Grab 'n' Go or work on it at the library.

April 1-11 - Ongoing - Found Word Poetry Contest. Available as a Grab 'n' Go or work on it at the library.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten - Birth to Kindergarten. Register anytime. It's never too early to read to your child! Please stop in to obtain your start-up packet or to collect your prizes!

Grab 'n' Go Kits for Kids: *While supplies last*

Jan. 3-14 - DIY Catapult. Pick up in the Children's Dept.

Feb. 1-14 - Glitter Mosaic Valentine Craft. Pick up in the Children's Dept.

Feb. 1-18 - Ongoing - Write a Six Word Story. Compose your work on our genre cards and add it to our writing display. Available as a Grab 'n' Go or work on it at the library

March 1-11 - Tissue Paper Suncatcher. Pick up in the Children's Dept.

April 1-11 - Found Word Poetry Contest. Pick up in the Children's Dept.

April 18-23 - Upcycled Spin Drum Instrument for Earth Day. Pick up in the Children's Dept.

Lil' Bookworms Storytime:

Jan. 12, 10:30 a.m. - Zoom Storytime.
Email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov to register.

Feb. 9, 10:30 a.m. - Zoom Storytime.
Email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov to register.

March 9, 10:30 a.m. - Zoom Storytime.
Email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov to register.

April 13, 10:30 a.m. - Zoom Storytime.
Email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov to register.

Teen Programs & Events:

Grab 'n' Go Kits for Tweens and Teens:
While supplies last

Jan. 3-21 - Paint-by-Sticker Travel Poster Grab 'n Go Kit. Ages 12-19. Pick up at the 1st Floor Circulation Desk or Teen Desk.

Feb. 1-19 - Lil' Heartbreakers Kit. Pick up at the 1st Floor Circulation Desk or Teen Desk.

Feb. 1-18 - Ongoing - Write a Six Word Story. Compose your work on our genre cards and add it to our writing display. Available as a Grab 'n' Go or work on it at the library

March 1-19 - Tissue Paper Suncatcher. Pick up at the 1st Floor Circulation Desk or Teen Desk.

April 1-11 - Found Word Poetry Contest. Pick up at the 1st Floor Circulation Desk or Teen Desk.

Events for Tweens & Teens:

Jan. 5 - Manga Club, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

Jan. 14 - Teens Create, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

Jan. 27 - Teen Trivia, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

Feb. 2 - Manga Club, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

Feb. 11 - Teens Create, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

See LIBRARY, p. 21

The Town of Vernon Fire Department dedicated its two newest pieces of apparatus at a “Wet Down” Ceremony this fall. The Wet Down ceremony is a deep rooted tradition in the fire service dating back to the 1800s when neighboring fire volunteer departments would “wash” a station’s new equipment thereby ritually anointing it before the local crew pushed the carriage into the fire house. At that time it was horse-drawn wagons or hand-pulled carts. Over 200 years later, the tradition is

still strong today, where often the water is sprayed from the pump of the retiring truck or a neighboring volunteer department’s truck.

The current officers and members of Engine Tank 341 and Squad 441 along with past members of each company, the Chiefs, members of the department, the mayor and distinguished town officials as well as the public were on hand to take part in the ceremony. Each Company Captain spoke briefly on the history of their respective company and the

new truck before each truck was ceremonially sprayed with water and then pushed into the firehouse by the company members.

The event also gave the public an opportunity to view the equipment and meet the firefighters who use it to protect the community. The Town of Vernon Volunteer Fire Department enjoys being active in the community by taking part in many community activities, fire prevention education and special events like this Wet Down ceremony.



Above, Engine Tank 441 being pushed into the station by its members.



Right, Engine Tank 341 being washed down. Photos by Duncan Stewart, TVFD Photographer

Squad 441 is a 2021 Pierce Enforcer and is based at Station 4, Nye Street.

Engine Tank 341, a 2019 Pierce Enforcer and is based at Station 3 on Talcottville Road.

The Town of Vernon Fire Department is always recruiting new members. For more information, please visit the department’s website at www.vernonfire.com.

Submitted by: Fire Chief Steven Eppler

LIBRARY, continued from p. 20

Feb. 24 - Teen Trivia, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

March 2 - Manga Club, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

March 11 - Teens Create, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

March 31 - Teen Trivia, 4-5 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

April 6 - Manga Club, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

April 22 - Teens Create, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

April 28 - Teen Trivia, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Meet in the teen area.

Register by phone 860-875-5892 or visit the Rockville Public Library website: RockvillePublicLibrary.org

Submitted by: Director Jennifer Johnston

New Equipment, Facilities, Focus Draw Students to Rockville High School's Agricultural Science and Technology Education Program

Students, Agriculture Commissioner, School and Town Leaders Mark Opening of New Barn

On a recent cool and foggy morning, students, faculty, community leaders and others gathered to cut a ribbon to formally open the new animal barn at Rockville High School's Agricultural Science and Technology Education program. Vernon firefighters also mounted a Rockville Ram weather vane atop the barn.

Cameras snapped and there was applause as the ribbon was cut, but the celebration was about so much more.

Rockville High School's ASTE program has undergone a rebirth in recent years thanks to a new vision from school leaders, new investment, a district focus on enhancing career pathways for students and a record number of young people who have enrolled in the program to prepare to lead Connecticut's agricultural economy into the future.

"Agriculture helps all of us enjoy a higher quality of life and it's the backbone of our economic system," said Erika Bahler, who has led Rockville's ASTE program for four years. "A strong, vital ASTE program means more students will consider pursuing careers in the field of agriculture, which will play a vital role in determining our future. We need bright, young individuals to take on the challenges of feeding our growing population in a way that is sustainable for generations to come."

Preparing students to be leaders in a vital industry benefits everyone, Vernon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Macary said.

"Supply chain issues have drawn a lot of attention and interest from the public," Dr. Macary said. "One in 10 jobs in the United States is related to agriculture and it is essential that we produce students who are prepared

to be leaders and innovators in this crucial industry. Rockville High School's ASTE program can prepare that next generation of leaders, who can help ensure a steady supply of food and other agricultural products for the world, and resolve those supply chain problems. This is an important program, and the work our students do makes us proud."

The Rockville High ASTE program serves not only Vernon students, but is a magnet school for students interested in agriculture from Bolton, East Windsor, Ellington, Manchester, Somers, South Windsor, Stafford, Tolland and Union.

Connecticut Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt said the improvements in Vernon's ASTE program are an investment in Connecticut's youth and ensures "agriculture in Connecticut will remain strong for future generations."

Agriculture in Connecticut consists of 5,500 family farms, employing 22,000 people who work 380,000 acres of land, including 50 acres beneath the waters of Long Island Sound where shellfish are harvested, Hurlburt said. Agriculture accounts for \$4 billion of Connecticut's economy and is crucial to Connecticut's future.

"Only 10 percent of America feeds the world and it does that through science, innovation, entrepreneurship," Hurlburt said. "You can't do that without training students with proper equipment and facilities. That's why these investments are so important."

Rockville's ASTE program has a long, proud tradition of preparing students for college and careers in agriculture-related industries. In recent years, school leaders have focused on making the program even stronger and it has embraced new technologies, such as drones, which are used by farmers to more efficiently check fields.

Students, staff and town employees have made a variety of improvements to the ASTE facility in recent years, culminating in the new barn, which replaced several small structures.

There is more to be done, Bahler said.

"We want to keep building this program and need an aquaculture facility and biotechnology lab to continue to support our students and give them the tools they need to be innovators, scientists and engineers in the field of 21st Century agriculture."

The efforts to make the program stronger are paying off. This year's freshman class has 48 students in ASTE. Total



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enrollment is 112, which is the highest enrollment in at least two decades.

Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said he has watched the transformation of the ASTE program and its facilities and praised school leaders, ASTE faculty and staff and the students for their hard work. He invited the students to join him in cutting the ribbon to formally opening the animal barn.

“This is an amazing place and you all have done a wonderful job,” Mayor Champagne said. “You have created something that makes our community proud.”

For more information about Rockville High School’s



Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne and Rockville High School ASTE students cut a ribbon opening a new animal barn.

ASTE program, please visit: vernonpublicschools.org

Submitted by: David Owens, *Communications Specialist*

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