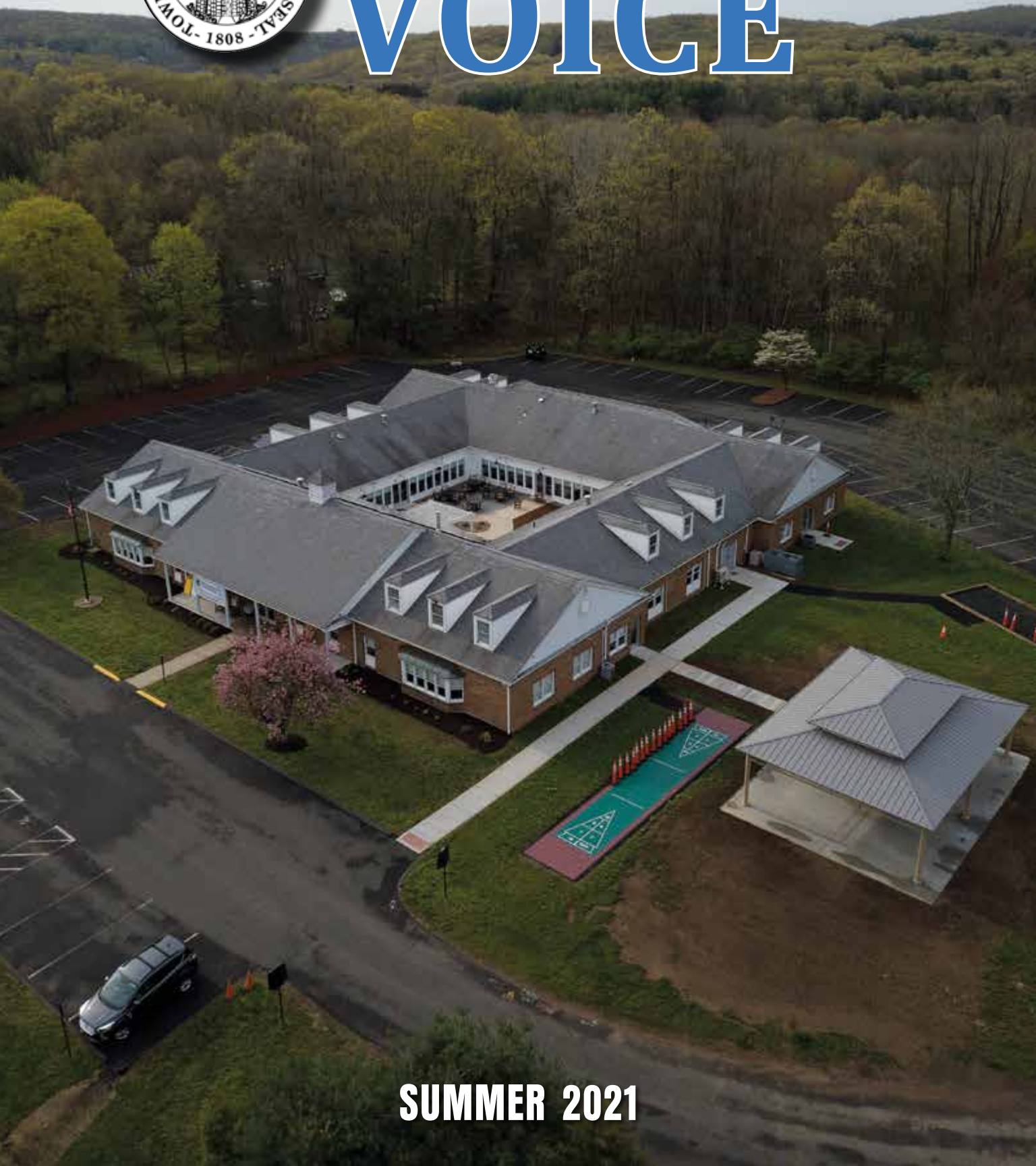




VERNON VOICE



SUMMER 2021

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Drone photo
by Tyler Gagnon



(left to right) Top row: Brad Stine on June 4; Adrienne Reedy on July 9; The Scally Brothers on August 6; Bennett Family on September 3. Bottom row: Rich O'Reilly on October 1; Walter Santos on November 5; Abbie LaFalam on December 10.

Promotional Partners



In addition to live streaming, you can watch archived coffeehouses on the "Jacobs Well Coffeehouse" YouTube Channel 24/7 or on the Community Voice Channel.

Jacob's Well
Christian Coffeehouse

Founded in 1995, Jacob's Well shares Good News through the Performing Arts. Until further notice, due to COVID-19 precautions, we are meeting in the Union Church sanctuary instead of the adjacent Oasis storefront. Admission is free and dress is casual. Please consider yourself invited! For details, call Drew Crandall at 860.871.6500 or see JacobsWellCoffeehouse.com.

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the Chronicle

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Cover photo courtesy of Sgt. Robert Marra of the Vernon Police Department. Read more about their Drone Unit on page 21.

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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Welcome to the Summer Edition of the Vernon Voice. We have expanded our offerings in this edition to include the Vernon Volunteer Collaborative. This group is comprised of many volunteer organizations, including the Strong Family Farm, Vernon Greenways Volunteers, and the Friends of Valley Falls. These three organizations are featured in this edition. As we move forward more of the member organizations will be featured to spotlight their valuable contributions to our community.

We are pleased to also announce we are formulating plans to offer summer youth programs and parks activities. Please check the Vernon Parks and Recreation website, vernonrec.org, for all the details. The Mayor's Summer Concert Series is sponsored this year by Santini Villa Apartments/Grand Lofts and Juliano Pools. Three concerts are planned: July 29, 2021 – Rockville's own 02nd Army Band; August 5, 2021 – Night Shift; and August 13, 2021 DYN-O-MYTE Disco Review. The concerts are 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings at McCoy Field. The rain date for each concert is the following Tuesday. Come join the fun!



As we begin to return to our pre-COVID operations, many of our Boards and Commissions will return to in-person meetings. If you are interested in joining a board, commission or committee please email: dwheelock@vernon-ct.gov or call (860)-870-3601 for more information on available openings.

Many of the articles in this edition share the important work of our departments and detail the projects they are working on. In addition to the departments in the magazine, this summer we will be renovating the Rockville High School Football Field and Track as well as continue to work on the renovation of the

Citizen Block Building in our historic business district. Special thanks to our cover photographer Sgt. Robert Marra, showing our Regional COVID Clinic location and the grounds of our new Senior Center. Take a moment to read Sgt. Marra's article on the Vernon Police Department Drone Unit on page 21.

If you are interested in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, you can call our Regional Call Center at 860-896-4568 or check vernon-ct.gov and make an appointment or check out one of our "You Choose Clinics." Both options are available to you or anyone you know. We are all in this together and we will continue the clinics until everyone who wants to be vaccinated is vaccinated.

I wish you all a safe and healthy summer season!



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52nd Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week

Town and City Clerks throughout the United States, Canada and 15 other countries celebrated May 2-8, 2021 as Professional Municipal Clerks Week. Initiated in 1969 by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), this week is aimed at increasing the public's awareness of the vital services Clerks provide for their citizens and the local government.

Municipal Clerks have pledged to be neutral and impartial, offering equal service to all. They are charged with the knowledge and implementation of ever-changing laws, issuance of licenses, registrations, certified copies, recording of land records and vital statistics, preparation of election absentee ballots, and the maintenance of mandated records for public inspection.

Clerks continually strive to improve the administration of their duties through

participation in IIMC sponsored education programs, seminars, workshops and meetings of their state professional organizations. Your Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerks are here to aid with your needs and answer your questions. Call us at 860-870-3662 if you'd like to set up an appointment to come see us.



And remember ~ June is dog licensing month. A valid rabies certificate and spayed or neutered certificate is required. The fee for an altered dog is \$8.00 and \$19.00 for unaltered, plus \$1.00 per month late fee after June 30th. All new licenses and renewals will be done this year by mail only.

Submitted by: Karen Daigle,
Town Clerk

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What happens during a revaluation?

A: If the project requires it, a physical inspection of both the interior and exterior of each property is conducted. Since data on all properties is maintained by the assessor's office, this step is not necessarily required for valuation or statistical updates although inspections of sale properties or a certain percentage of houses may be conducted as a part of the project. While data collection is being conducted, appraisers are studying the recent market sales in order to gain a full understanding of the real estate market in your city or town. This study of recent property sales allows the appraisers to establish valuation models used to estimate the value of properties that have not sold using comparisons with recent sales. The valuation models are applied to all non-sale properties in order to approximate

the market value of each property.

How will I know if my assessment is equitable?

A: The fairness, or equity, of the real property tax depends on whether similar properties are treated alike. State Law also requires your assessor to include the estimate of the market value for each property, the assessment for each property and the uniform percentage for all taxable property on the tentative assessment roll. In order to determine if your home has been properly assessed, you should know the assessment of comparable homes in your neighborhood. While they may not be identical, they should have the same standards applied. Assessors or revaluation companies will share neighborhood statistical analysis indicating the level of fairness in assessments with your neighborhood and town.

If hearings are being held, how do I prepare for one?

A: When you come to a hearing be prepared to support your position and bring any information that you may have (property information and/or data changes, comparable sales, pictures of your property, etc.) to the hearing. If the revaluation required a physical inspection of the property, make sure you allowed a physical inspection to be conducted or you may lose your right to an appeal.

What is an informal hearing?

A: Towards the end of the revaluation, every property owner receives a notice of their proposed valuation. If they have a question or concern about the proposed valuation, they are asked to call the Assessor or their contractor to set a date and time for an informal hearing. This appointment is meant to allow a

See **REVALUATION**, p. 22



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Roa Alammari, MD, FACOG
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With warm weather approaching and swim season around the corner, many people are taking the

plunge and deciding to install an above ground pool. If so, here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

The Application Process- For a typical above ground pool installation, a *Building, Electrical, and Zoning* permit are required to ensure the work is done properly and is in an approved location on the property. Decks will require additional permits and inspections, and if your property has a well or septic system, you will also need written approval from the North Central District Health

Department.

If you use a contractor to install the pool, they will normally apply for the required permits. Although a homeowner may apply for permits, the applicant is ultimately responsible for the work that is done. The application process consists of gathering and completing the required documents, submitting the application along with fees, and waiting for the permit to be reviewed and issued before beginning installation. A "Swimming Pool Permit Application" packet is available for download on the Vernon Building Department website to help with this process.

The Inspection Process- There are several inspections that must be performed before you can enjoy your pool. A Trench & Bond inspection verifies the electrical conduit is at

the correct burial depth and the electrical equipment and metal parts around the pool are mechanically bonded to prevent electrocution. A Final inspection will then verify the final installation of the electrical system is correct, a pool alarm is in place and functioning, and all ladders and safety barrier requirements have been met.

The Approval Process- Once all final inspections have been passed and a Certificate of Approval has been issued by the Vernon Building Department, you're ready to enjoy your pool for the season and years to come. Have fun and please remember pool safety is the responsibility of the pool owner, and nothing can replace direct supervision by an adult with small children.

Submitted by: Steve Prattson, *Building Official*

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Nine Vernon students recently competed at the Mansfield Regional History Day Contest. This year's theme "Communication in History: the Key to Understanding" is fitting for 2021. We are so proud of these students for persevering through challenging research circumstances and sharing their passion through their chosen topics and project format.

Soumil Jain, grade 6: "The Infamy Speech: 518 Words That Changed America" **FIRST PLACE, Junior Individual Documentary**

Hayden Reel, grade 8: "Communication in History: Frederick Douglass and The North Star" **SECOND PLACE, Junior Individual Exhibit**

Catharina Walter-Gillett, grade 8: Exhibit "The Hello Girls"

Allyson Autieri, grade 6: Exhibit "Communicating with Chimpanzees Brings a World of Understanding"



Ethan Powell, grade 6: "Mayday at Tenerife: OK is Not OK" **THIRD PLACE, Junior Individual Exhibit**

Sabina Urbanska, grade 6: Exhibit "The Enigma Machine"

Renzo Chavez, grade 6: Paper "Radio Receiver Technology and Communication in Football"

Dominik Rose, grade 6: Paper "Esperanto: An Idea, A Language, A Movement"

Clarissa Halpryn & John Margelony, grade 10: "Ted Sorensen: The Letter that Saved the World" **FIRST PLACE, Senior Group Performance**

Soumil, Hayden, Ethan, Clarissa and John advance to the State History Day Contest in May.

Teachers Mrs. Lee, Mrs. McManaman, and Ms. Brady send a big thank you to everyone who participated this year!

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph P. Macary, *Superintendent*

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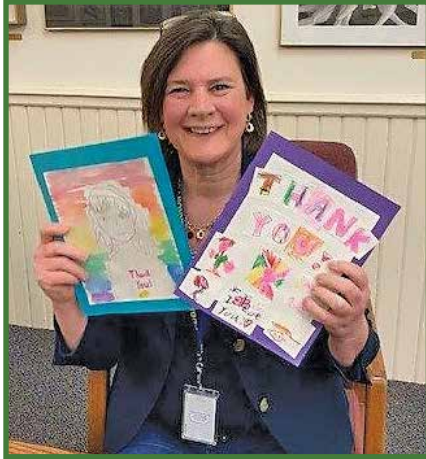
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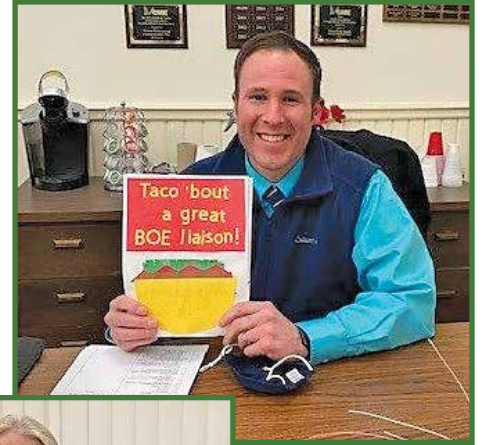
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March was Board of Education Member Appreciation month. Last year collectively, Vernon Board of Education members put in 244 hours or 5 weeks of committee work, site work, focus groups, workshops, Professional Development and Board meetings without pay. These hours do not include their school liaison time. Board members were honored and recognized at the Board Meetings held in March. Each Board member was presented with a carnation from the Future Farmers of America through our

Agriculture Science and Technology Department, a set of hand-made note cards from Rockville High School Art students, a box of chocolates and student-made gratitude cards. Board members were thanked for their efforts and service to the Vernon school community.

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph P. Macary, Superintendent



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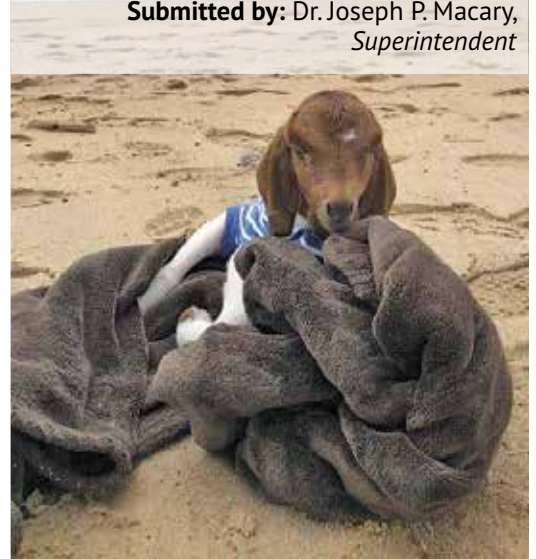
Rockville High School Agriculture Science and Technology Education Program (ASTE)



Rockville High School Agriculture Science and Technology Education (ASTE) Program's animals recently had some spring babies. Three baby lambs were born the beginning of February - one set of twins, Jill & James, and one additional male from another of their mommas. They are Horned Dorset Sheep.

Also born was one baby buck (male) kid born early April. His name is Franklin. He is a Boer Goat. Franklin even went to the beach over April Break!

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph P. Macary,
Superintendent



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On March 5, 2021, the Town of Vernon, Vernon Public Schools and the North Central District Health Department vaccinated more than 500 members of the Vernon school staff who wanted to be vaccinated. They also assisted their neighbors in Ellington by vaccinating about 100 Ellington school staff at the Vernon Senior Center Vaccination Clinic. The second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was administered to both Vernon and Ellington school staff on April 1, 2021.

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph P. Macary, *Superintendent*



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Lugg Memorial Field at Grove Hill Cemetery

CEMETERY DEPARTMENT

There is a special space in Grove Hill Cemetery known as Lugg Memorial Field. If you follow the windy roads through the cemetery past the iconic chapel you will see a flag pole that stands over 50 feet tall bearing the American flag. This sacred burial ground is reserved exclusively for Vernon military veterans. With over 100 burials to date, the space is dotted with granite flush government markers etched with the names, branches of the military and ranks of those who have passed. A memorial brick walkway with the names of those who are honored for their service leads up to the flag pole. For Memorial Day, a flag is placed at the head of each government marker as a sign of respect and solidarity for these heroes. Lugg Memorial Field is one of the stops during the annual Memorial Day parade for families to pay tribute to those who have passed. It is also the site of the Wreaths Across America ceremony

which takes place every December in conjunction with a main event held at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C. where over 250,000 wreaths are laid on veteran's graves.

Lugg Memorial Field was created in



the 1960s at the request of veterans and their families to have an exclusive burial space. The field was named in honor of Vernon resident Harry Lugg, Connecticut Court of Common Pleas Judge, World War II Naval Commander and Commander of Vernon's American Legion Post.

The Town of Vernon Cemetery Commission will furnish a free grave space in Lugg Memorial Field to any honorably discharged veteran, who joined the service while a Vernon resident or who is a veteran and present registered voter of the Town of Vernon. Memorial bricks are available for purchase with the inscription of any veteran's name. The memorial bricks are available to any veteran or family who would like to honor their loved one. For more information please contact the cemetery office at 860.875.3158

Submitted By: Travis Clark, *Cemetery Superintendent*

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The Rockville High School Junior and Senior classes recently held a Powderpuff Football food drive. With the generosity of students and staff, Rockville High School was able to provide the Hockanum Valley Community Council Food Pantry with 791 pounds of food, paper products and diapers (totaling 1098 items), as well as a cash donation of \$80. In a time of need, Rockville High School gave a great team effort to help feed members of our community!

Submitted by: Dr. Joseph P. Macary, *Superintendent*



VERNON VOLUNTEERS' COLLABORATIVE

The Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative (VVC) is a group of 13 Vernon nonprofit organizations helping to make Vernon a special place to live and work through:

- Preservation or beautification of Vernon's open space, parks and environment.
- Preserving and sharing Vernon's history and historic

properties.

- Encouraging appreciation of and participation in the arts.

Vernon is blessed to have dedicated and passionate volunteers who donate their time to such organizations as Arts Center East, Friends of Valley Falls, New England Civil War Museum, Northern Connecticut Land Trust, Strong Family Farm, Vernon Garden Club, Vernon Greenways Volunteers and Vernon Historical Society.

The Coronavirus and the attendant shutdown of activities affected each organization differently over the past year. Many of our volunteers are older, falling into the senior category and had to take extra precautions.

Education and engagement with Vernon residents is a program priority of many organizations and had to be curtailed. No gathering for talks, organized walks, fairs or inviting you into our facilities.

Yet we found ways to connect either in person or creatively online. For example:

- The Vernon Historical Society carefully held its annual book sale last July and this April.
- The Vernon Chorale learned to sing together online and regularly shared songs with you.
- Arts Center East opened with exhibits last September and has remained accessible since.
- Vernon Greenways Volunteers maintained our trails and gardens using smaller work groups.
- The Northern CT Land Trust led smaller hikes.
- Strong Family Farm held a virtual Chicken Run and brightened the fall with its Scarecrow Contest.

See COLLABORATIVE, p. 20



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Are you eligible for Renter's Rebate?

The Town of Vernon Social services Department is now accepting Renters Rebate applications for the residents of Vernon. The application deadline is October 1st, 2021.

What is the Renter's Rebate program?

State law provides a reimbursement program for Connecticut 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. Renters' rebates can be up to \$900 for married couples and \$700 for single persons. 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.

The program objective is to provide a direct, partial reimbursement of rent and utility bills paid by certain elderly renters and certain totally disabled renters for those who qualify.

Who qualifies?

Recipient or spouse must be 65 years of age or older, or be 50 years of age or older and the surviving spouse of a renter who at the time of the renter's death had qualified and was entitled to tax relief provided such spouse was domiciled with such renter at the time of the renters' death, or 18 years of age or older and permanently and totally disabled. There is also a one year state residency requirement. Grants are based upon income as specified in state law.

How do residents apply?

To apply just contact Vernon Social Services at 860-870-3661 to receive application information. Application materials can be dropped off at the Social Services window to the left of the front doors of Town Hall at 14 Park Place during normal business hours, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, and 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Fridays. After business hours application materials can be dropped off in the secured, locked drop box in the back of Town Hall next to the handicap entrance.

Submitted by: Michelle Hill, *Interim Director*

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Spring has sprung! As we start to do our annual spring cleaning, look around your home for common fire hazards. Items that we use every day are often overlooked for cleaning and simple maintenance that could prevent an unwanted fire. The Vernon Office of the Fire Marshal has compiled the simple list below that will help to keep your family safe.

Spring Cleaning Checklist

- **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms** – Replace smoke and CO alarms batteries and test them once a month by pushing the test button. Gently clean the alarms, but make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions first.
- **Kitchen** – Keep countertops and stovetops free of grease and clutter. Excess grease on the drip pan or stovetop can easily catch fire. Clean oil and food spills immediately after they occur and wait until the stove is cool to wipe away the oil or grease spills. Keep items that can catch fire, such as oven mitts, towels, or wooden utensils, away from your stovetop.
- **Electrical Cords** – Inspect the electrical cords in your home and replace worn or tattered ones. Avoid

running cords under carpets or across doorways to prevent them from being damaged. Use extension cords only temporarily and plug major appliances directly into wall sockets.

- **Clothes Dryers** – Excess lint in the dryer is the number one cause of clothes dryer fires. Clean the lint that has been collected around the drum before or after each load of laundry. Always use a lint filter and clean it regularly. Move combustible items like boxes and clothing around your dryer to a safer area.
- **Grilling** – Clean the grease or fat build-up after every use. Doing so not only decreases the risk of fire but also helps the food cook better. Check the propane tank, hose, and all connection points for leaks. If you smell gas when the grill is on, turn off the tank and burners immediately. If you have a charcoal grill, use only charcoal starter fluid.
- **Gas Cans** – Always store gasoline in approved containers and keep them in a well ventilated area.

Submitted by: Daniel Wasilewski, Fire Marshal

VERNON SENIOR CENTER

Construction on the new Senior Center Pavilion has begun

While both staff and members of the Vernon Senior Center anxiously await the time when they can gather back at the Center, the exciting news is that the construction of a spacious new pavilion has begun!

The large, rectangular pavilion is located on the side lawn adjacent to the outdoor game courts.

The pavilion will be used for a variety of organized programs, picnics, and entertainment, in addition to being a cool, shady spot to relax and enjoy the outdoors, while participating in one of our outdoor sports.

Submitted by: Maureen Gabriele, Director



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Household Hazardous Waste Collection Schedule

- Vernon residents may dispose of hazardous waste on the following dates: June 5, August 28, September 25 and October 30, 2021. All collection dates are Saturdays from 8 AM to 1 PM at the Capitol Region East Hazardous Waste facility, which is adjacent to the Manchester Landfill located at 321 Olcott Street. In addition, there will be a collection on Saturday, October 16 from 8 AM to 1 PM held in Somers at 5 Vision Boulevard (the parking lot next to Somers High School). The drop-off is free to Vernon residents but the Town is billed approximately \$50 per participating vehicle, therefore, it is requested that residents bring as many hazardous materials as possible to the collection site, possibly carpooling with neighbors.

The following items will not be accepted: alkaline batteries, ammunition, fireworks and explosives. Motor oil and antifreeze are not accepted at HHW collection events, but they can be disposed of at the Vernon Transfer Station at no charge to residents. For residents that have only paint to dispose of, latex or oil-based paints may be brought to the Sherwin Williams located at 100 Tolland Turnpike (Rt. 83). It is suggested that residents call ahead. They will accept up to 5 gallons per day free of charge providing cans are labelled, sealed, non-leaking and covered by the PaintCare program. There are certain specialty paints and stains not covered by PaintCare; these coatings ARE acceptable at the HHW collection events. To learn more about PaintCare, click here: <https://www.paintcare.org/paintcare-states/connecticut/>

For full listings of what materials are and are not acceptable at the CREOC Household Hazardous Waste collection events, visit the Town of Vernon's website at www.vernon-ct.gov.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

1. Don't forget your face mask.
2. Load all HHW in trunk or rear of vehicle as staff will NOT be accessing front or rear seats of vehicles.
3. Do not bring passengers or pets.
4. Have valid driver's license or vehicle registration with you.
5. Used oil and antifreeze are NOT accepted, contact Vernon Public Works directly for disposal instructions.
6. All paint shall be separated from other HHW. This will allow staff to process vehicles more efficiently.
7. DRIED OUT LATEX PAINT OR EMPTY PAINT CANS will not be accepted since these can be disposed in your regular trash.
8. Paints can be disposed of conveniently anytime through statewide recycling program. Locations and details at paintcare.org.

AT THE COLLECTION SITE

1. Only one person per vehicle.
2. Remain in vehicle at all times with windows closed and wear a face mask.
3. Vehicles will be approached from the passenger's side.
4. Must show driver's license through the window for Town verification.
5. HHW shall be in rear of vehicle. Vehicles shall have remote trunk/gate mechanism or have compartment open prior to vehicle inspection.
6. No trailers or work vans will be allowed.
7. All paperwork will be done by on-site staff from the outside of the vehicle the day of collection. Pre-printed online forms will not be used.
8. NO CONTAINERS WILL BE

RETURNED. For example, old gas must be in a disposal container.

REMINDERS: The drop-off is free to Vernon residents but the Town is billed approximately \$45 per participating vehicle, therefore, it is requested that residents bring as many hazardous materials as possible to the collection site, possibly carpooling with neighbors. The following items will not be accepted: alkaline batteries, ammunition, fireworks and explosives. Motor oil and antifreeze are not accepted at HHW collection events, but they can be disposed of at the Vernon Transfer Station at no charge to residents.

PAINT DISPOSAL: For residents that have only paint to dispose of, latex or oil-based paints may be brought to a designated PaintCare drop-off location. The closest participating location for Vernon residents is the Sherwin-Williams paint store located at 100 Tolland Turnpike in Manchester (across from Kohls on Rt. 83). Store phone number is 860-533-9548. **Please call before going to ensure they have room in their storage area.** *NOTE: At this time most Sherwin Williams stores have a 5-gallons per visit limit for recycling unwanted paints/stains per visit; contact the store directly to confirm their take back program policies. There are certain specialty paints and stains not covered by PaintCare; these coatings ARE acceptable at the HHW collection events. To learn more about PaintCare, go to paintcare.org.*

MULCH - Are you aware that approximately 8,000 cubic yards of brush are dropped off annually at the Transfer Station? Add to that an estimated 3,000 trees from the Christmas tree curbside collection and tree drop-off. All is processed into a mulch product which is offered back to residents free of charge at the Transfer Station. In addition, the Vernon Public Works Department will deliver a 4-cubic-yard load of

See BULKY, p. 25

Located in Vernon, Connecticut the New England Civil War Museum and research center resides in the historic downtown section of Rockville. It is housed in an original Grand Army of the Republic Hall, on the second floor of the Town Hall, 14 Park Place.

The Museum continues its tradition of honoring those who served the Union cause in the American Civil War. Since the early 1990s a dedicated staff of volunteers has curated and interpreted the priceless artifacts and documents contained within the museum, many of them donated by the original members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) that met in the hall from 1890 to the mid-1920s. Our staff includes several members with advanced degrees, living history re-enactors and those with special education in historic preservation. The museum hosts weekly open-house hours, special educational presentations by distinguished speakers, and organizational meetings of the GAR hereditary organization, the Sons of Union



Veterans of the Civil War (SOUVCW).

During the COVID break these dedicated staff members have realigned the museum to focus upon the experiences of the average Civil War soldier, from their pre-war occupations through their warfare experiences to their post-war fates. We have done this by expanding the display by using new rolling displays purchased with two generous grants by the Tenney Foundation.

A visitor will experience the enlistment, equipping, arming and training of the soldiers. Moving to their life while in camp, on the road and into battle. And their after war careers and membership in the GAR and the brotherhood created by the war experience.

Visitors can expect to see a collection of armaments, uniforms, and camp accoutrements of the soldier. Visuals and story boards of the experience of this period of our history are present throughout the museum. These story boards express the sights, sounds and emotions of experiencing combat, supplemented by actual quotes from letters and diaries in the museum's collection.

The New England Civil War Museum is home to the O'Connell-Chapman Library and Research Center, which includes a wide variety of items of both the Civil War and post-war periods. This includes books, diaries and regimental histories. Researchers can contact the museum for access to these documents.

The New England Civil War Museum is operated by members of the Alden Skinner Camp #45 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The museum is open every Sunday noon to 3:00 p.m.. For more information please call (860) 870-3563. If interested in joining the Sons of Union Veterans you may email Brian Motola at Brimotola@aol.com.

Submitted by: Brian Motola, Member



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**Dr. Laura Roy • Dr. Eran Shemer
Dr. Shaleighne McKiernan**



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Transfer Station Permits are Available for Purchase at the Collector of Revenue Office

This time of year, many residents are hard at work with spring cleaning and yardwork and are looking to purchase a permit or punch card for access to the transfer station.

Simply stop in with your current registration for your vehicle that you will be taking to the transfer station, driver's license, and payment of cash or check to purchase a permit for \$5.00 and a punchcard for \$60.00 (total \$65.00). Both are necessary: a permit for the vehicle to access the transfer station, and the punch card to dispose of materials.

Permits must be purchased annually and are good for the fiscal year July 1 through June 30. Punch cards do not

expire. Permits for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 will be available for purchase early in June 2021.

You are encouraged to visit www.vernon-ct.gov, Department of Public Works for additional information regarding the Transfer Station: hours of operation, acceptable items, unacceptable items, and other disposal options.

Tax Office Hours:

Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday 8:30-4:30

Thursday 8:30-7:00

Friday 8:30-1:00

Submitted by: Terry Hjarne, *Collector*

Dart Hill Road Bridge Project Delayed

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

The long-anticipated bridge replacement project on Dart Hill Road has been delayed until next year. Originally intended for a spring 2021 construction start, delays associated with permitting and utility relocation prevented putting this project out for bid in January, which would have severely limited the opportunity for work to be completed in one construction season.

By bidding this project during the fall, with a start date of April 4, 2022, we can limit the construction to the time of year most suited for this type of work and be sure that the inconvenience due to the detour will be minimized. The contract documents and design prepared by SLR Consulting of Cheshire prepared with "expedite construction" techniques. Kishor Patel, Project Manager and Principal Structural Engineer at SLR says "using precast elements when possible and having a full shutdown of traffic in the work area, we will provide the contractor with a work area that allows them to remove and replace the bridge safely and efficiently." It is expected that during the months of June, July

and August traffic on Dart Hill Road will be detoured through a 4-mile alternate route along Skinner Road, Route 74 and Route 83. Additionally, pedestrian and bicycle traffic will be excluded from the work zone during construction. Hikers along the Hockanum River Trail North and the River Trail South will likewise need to use the detour if they wish to enjoy the trail from end to end.

The new structure will be longer and wider, improving the flow path for the Hockanum River, which should reduce the chance of flooding and damage to the bridge foundation and structural elements. Additionally, the modified shape and curve will improve sightlines for traffic both on Dart Hill Road and Thrall Road. The final improvement will be upgrading the sidewalk on the north side of the bridge and the adjacent approaches. This will make a seamless connection for pedestrians to the recent work completed as part of the Safe Routes to School Program.

The construction portion of this project will be completely funded from a Connecticut Department of Transportation Local Transportation

Capital Improvement Plan grant, with an anticipated cost of \$2.4 million. The Town of Vernon has paid approximately \$200,000 for the investigation, design and specifications to be able to solicit bid prices from qualified contractors. Vernon will be responsible for approximately \$250,000 in construction administration and inspection services.

Vernon has been very aggressive in pursuing grant and cost sharing programs for bridge replacement projects over the last two decades and the condition of our bridges reflects the care and priority that has been placed on upgrading and maintaining this critical component of our infrastructure. The Connecticut Department of Transportation biannually inspects 13 bridges over 20' long. The Dart Hill Road Bridge one of the last 'local' bridge that needs reconstruction. The rest are in good shape and we monitor their condition to provide maintenance and preservation measures as needed to keep them that way.

Submitted by: Dave Smith, *Engineer*

Rockville High School Student Kaylin Maher Awarded 2nd Place in the Prestigious 2021 Lynn Decaro Poetry Contest

Congratulations to Rockville High School Student Kaylin Maher who was awarded 2nd place in the prestigious 2021 Lynn Decaro Poetry Contest for CT high school students. Kaylin will receive \$50.00 and her poem will also be added to the Connecticut Poetry Society website. www.ct-poetry-society.org

These are the judge's comments:

"Envy" is a heartbreakingly beautiful, horrifying, powerful, and important poem. The first line puts the reader in what is expected to be a warm and comforting place—a grandmother telling stories and sharing prized mementos, but this image is then turned on its side. Suddenly, the speaker is making a pact with an unidentified "you" to live up to an unhealthy, anorexic idea of beauty. In my mind, the "you" is likely a sister, though it could also be a mother, or some other female close to the speaker. At the same time, by the poet using the pronoun "you" in the poem, we, the readers, become more than just distant observers. We become part of the conspiracy that places undue value on a girl's looks and conveys to girls that they must be unrealistically thin. However, the poem is in no way preachy. Rather, its strength lies in its delicate use of language and gorgeous, mostly traditionally feminine metaphors and imagery to convey its message: "I asked you to be my seamstress./ Make me your muse,/ pluck the cellulite from my bones,/ stitch my porcelain together." While the girl's thighs are being trimmed and stitched, the reader's heart is unraveling. Like the fork around the plate, the language of the poem waltzes intensely from one scene to another, building on the speaker's obsession, and the you's con-conspiracy, to end in the speaker being dissatisfied that her calf is not "smaller than the leg of the kitchen

Kaylin's poem was also chosen as one of 89 Honorable Mention poems out of over 965 entries in Hollins University's Nancy Thorp Poetry Contest.

Kaylin's poem:

Envy

I remember when Nana cooed tales of her longevity.
She showed us her rusted jades that managed
to withstand what our bodies could not.

We promised that our ribs would prod
through our chests before we let our jades tarnish.

I asked you to be my seamstress.
Make me your muse,
pluck the cellulite from my bones,
stitch my porcelain together.

The first time your spool and needle graced my thigh
I was twelve.

Even after you closed the seams
between my stretch marks,
I'd still pick at the parts
that spilled over my chair.

Don't let skin seep through the sutures.

You'd watch my fork waltz around my plate.
I'd still butter my toast and wash my untainted
silverware.

I couldn't tell you how honey felt on my tongue,
what the tang of lemon tasted like,
or what was for supper last night.

All I could remember was
your calf was smaller than the leg of the kitchen table
and mine wasn't.



COLLABORATIVE, continued from p. 14

- The Vernon Garden Club continued caring for our Gateway Gardens.
- The New England Civil War Museum reworked its exhibits and opened to visitors in the fall.

These are just a few of the things we did through the shutdown. To learn more about our 13 organizations activities this past year visit Tankerhoosen.info/

vvc2020.htm.

As things continue to open this year we'll slowly return to normal and look forward to welcoming you back to join us. To learn about upcoming events there are Facebook, MeetUp and Newsletter links on the reference webpage. Activities can also be found on the town calendar on Vernon's website. To learn more about VVC visit VernonVolunteers.org.

Submitted by: Jon Roe, Chairman

The Vernon Police Department Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Unit, more commonly referred to as the Drone Unit, has been a valuable resource for law enforcement, first responders, and during emergency operations. The Vernon Police Department and many other law enforcement agencies have adopted drone programs after seeing the benefits and value they provide to improving public safety to the community we serve.

The Vernon Police Department initiated its drone program back in 2016 and spent several months developing the project before its implementation. In the early stages, the Town of Vernon studied the use of drone technology in public safety operations, while also researching best practices, policies, and procedures regarding the use of UAS technology in law enforcement.

Early on in the drone program, several

sworn Vernon Police Officers were trained in the operation of drones and use of UAS technology. They each earned required Federal Aviation Administration pilot licenses and certifications necessary to operate drones in the performance of their law enforcement duties. The pilots went through an initial training which included 16 hours of instruction and flight hours. Every year the Vernon Police Department continues to train and keep up with the certifications needed to fly.

The Vernon Police Department has had several deployments of the UAS and has had two noteworthy finds. The first was the successful location of a lost race horse in October 2017 using a thermal imaging device mounted to the drone. The second was the successful location of an elderly blind and deaf man who had been stuck in a marsh area for more than 12 hours in bitterly cold

temperatures back in February of 2020. The male was found alive and transported to the hospital. This deployment made national news.

The Vernon Police Department continues to stay current with UAS technology through training and collaboration with other agencies.

Submitted by: Sgt. Robert Marra



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Parker-Place.org

Warm weather has arrived! At the Rockville Public Library we're hitting the ground running with an exciting slate of programs, activities, and resources to make this summer the best ever!

Summer Reading:

Tails and Tales, RPL's Summer Reading program for children and teens, runs June 21 – July 30. Registration begins June 1 and is on-going. Avoid the summer slide by making reading a daily habit! Participants will earn weekly reading reward goodie bags, fun brag tags, and cool beads to create their own 'Read to Bead' necklace. Teens will also be receiving weekly goodie bags and collectible beads with their Curbside service. To register email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov with your child's name, age, rising grade and school.

Adults get to share in the fun with summer reading bingo, which will run concurrently with Tails and Tales. Pick up a reading-themed bingo card at the library or print one directly from our website. Readers who complete five in a row across, down, or diagonally—or four corners!—can turn their card in for a raffle ticket. We'll host three gift card raffle drawings over the course of the summer (July 2, July 16, July 30).

Story Time and Early Literacy:

Lil' Bookworms Online Storytime is posted on Facebook the first three Mondays of the Month at 10:30 AM. All of Ms. Kara's read-alouds are archived on our Facebook video page, so you and your family can access them whenever you like! In addition, RPL offers a self-paced 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program with milestone reading rewards for ages birth-K. It's never too early to read to your child!

Crafts:

Kits can be reserved by phone or email starting on the first day listed below.

Paint-A-Pot Grab 'n' Go with sunflower seeds, for all ages // June 1-June 11.

Take and Make Patriotic Wreath, for adults // Jun. 14 - July 2

French Knitting Kit, ages 8 and up // July 1 - July 31

Animal Puppet Grab 'n' Go, ages 4-7 // July 1 - July 31

Outdoor Tic Tac Toe Take and Make, for adults // July 19 - 31

Programs for Adults:

Register online at: rockvillepubliclibrary.org/events

Eat This Not That via Zoom: Nutrition with Jill Patterson, RDN // Tuesday, June 1 at 4:00 p.m.

Backyard Small Fruits 101 via Zoom. Learn about growing berries // Wednesday, June 2 at 1:00 p.m.

Finding and Using Newspapers for Your Genealogical Research // Wednesday, June 30 at 1:00 p.m.

Cemetery Resources for Genealogical Research // Wednesday July 28 at 1:00 p.m.

Intermediate Sign Language // July—see calendar for exact dates and times

BookFlix and TrueFlix:

BookFlix is an online resource for children in pre-school to 3rd grade, which pairs interactive, video storybooks with related non-fiction e-books. Reinforce your child's reading skills and introduce them to a world of knowledge and exploration!

For students in grades 3-6, TrueFlix is a fun online resource that focuses on science and social studies. The program helps children hone their literacy skills, bolster their understanding of crucial subjects relating to science and social studies, and enhances their ability to organize and assemble information for class reports, exams, and assignments.

To access these resources go to rockvillepubliclibrary.org under the Children's tab.

To learn more about Rockville Public Library's services, materials, or programming, please visit us at rockvillepubliclibrary.org, email rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov, call us at 860-875-5892 ext. 100, or check out our Facebook page.

Submitted by: Jennifer Johnston-Marius, *Director*

REVALUATION, continued from p. 7

brief discussion about the valuation process, review the specifics of the property in question and to answer general questions the owner may have. Most hearings last about 10-15 minutes. Homeowners are asked to come prepared with their questions and to have compared their property to other comparable ones in their neighborhood. They

are also encouraged to provide the hearing officer with copies of any documentation they may have regarding specific issues with their proposed assessments. It is important to remember that an informal hearing is not a forum to discuss taxes or town politics nor is it an in-depth class on appraisal practices and theory. It is strictly meant to answer general questions on the proposed property

assessments. The hearing officer will take notes during your meeting to document the information you have discussed. They will later determine if further review of your property assessment is necessary based on these notes. The proposed values are not final until all hearings and any data or value changes resulting from the hearings are completed.

Submitted by: Dave Wheeler, *Town Assessor*

The historic village of Talcottville was established in 1802 by John Warburton, an English immigrant who introduced mechanized cotton textile production into Connecticut. He bought a large parcel of land which was originally part of Bolton, that is now southwestern Vernon. Several large textile mills were constructed along the Tankerhoosen River, which led to the development of the greater Talcottville area with family homes and businesses. As the years went by and mill owners changed, fire became an increasing danger to the residents and proprietors of the greater Talcottville and Vernon areas. On March 23, 1943 a group of dedicated, responsible men from the Vernon Center, Dobsonville, and Talcottville areas convened to organize the Vernon Volunteer Fire Department. Three companies were established to protect the growing community. The Talcottville fire company, dubbed No. 3, was originally housed in the Talcott Brothers Mill office building on

Main Street, as funds were scarce. The original members of Company 3 included: Franklin G. Welles, Wilfred Kent, Ezerias Caron, and Raymond Young. Around 1965 a new fire station was constructed, and is still in use today at 100 Hartford Turnpike, adjacent to Main Street. The fire apparatus have certainly changed over the years as well, starting with a hand pumper housed at Company 3, Mechanized fire apparatus followed. Company 3 operates a 2019 Pierce Enforcer Engine Tank capable of pumping 1500 gallons a minute. One characteristic from those early days remains, strong, and that is volunteerism. The Town of Vernon Fire Department still operates exclusively with volunteers in each of its fire companies. If you are interested in joining our volunteer family, please visit www.vernonfire.com/recruitment.html for more information!

Submitted By: Robert Babcock, *Assistant Chief*



L-R: Dep. Chief James Bogar Jr., Capt. O. Gagnon, 1st Lieut. David Tomko, 2nd Lieut. Anthony Martucci, Richard Hescocock, Allen Therrien, William Davis, I. B. Davis, Robert Schoff, Harold Ames, Omer Martin, Edward Galligan. Not Shown: Eng. Richard Copping, Douglas Miller, Charles Tatro, Howard Small, Ermin Skidgel, William Call, Leslie Kittle.



Dance Program

Despite the pandemic, nothing was getting in the way of our Beyond Dance Program. It's designed to increase confidence and self-esteem while teaching both children and adults a variety of dance styles based on the class(es) they sign up for. Our instructor Miss Jess jumped into action working with our Department to ensure the dancers had classes while abiding by State mandates. Class sizes were reduced, safety protocols put into place and the creativity kicked in and classes were offered outside, inside and through Zoom based on people's comfort levels. More than to over 100 dancers participated per month!

After School Program

Our newly reinvented program, After School Club (formerly known as R.E.K), at its peak provided after school daycare at all the elementary schools. We found it needed to adapt very quickly once COVID-19 hit especially at first to the provide a safe environment for first responders children, before reverting to its original purpose as parents and guardians headed back to work. The program is currently operating at Center Road School and Skinner Road School. The program has proven to provide much needed socialization for children, offering games, playground time, homework help and even some guest appearances.

April Vacation Camp

Vernon Parks and Recreation Department held Vacation Camp April 12-16. Vacation Camp provides a fun, safe place for children to spend their time away from school. The Camp was hosted at the Vernon Teen Center 7:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. Participants spent time enjoying the outdoors, playing cooperative games in the gymnasium, working on arts and crafts projects and many more activities. This year's camp included visits by the Connecticut Humane Society and the Connecticut Science Center.

The Connecticut Humane Society presented its Safety PAWtrol program. Participants learned how to safely interact with dogs by learning how to

read their body language, how to best approach a dog on leash and what to do if you encounter a dog off-leash.

The Connecticut Science Center joined via Zoom to present Creative Creatures. Joined by an CSC educator, participants explored what an adaptation is and how thousands of species of animals survive due to their specific adaptations for their home environment. During the live Q & A session, participants learned about the adaptations of bearded dragons, snakes, frogs, camels and several more animals.

Vacation Camp programs are available during winter school break, April school break and multiple days during the school year.

Park Maintenance & Vernon Greenway Volunteers

The Vernon Parks maintainers and

Vernon Greenway Volunteers worked together to replace the decking of the footbridge on the Rails to Trails Rockville Spur that crosses the Tankerhoosen River. This project was funded by a grant.

The partnership between the Parks and Recreation Department and Vernon Greenway Volunteers is extremely valuable and appreciated. The teamwork of the two groups maintains miles of award winning trails.

The Vernon Parks and Recreation Department continues to closely monitor COVID guidelines and work to provide safe, fun activities and events for the community. Continue to follow us on Facebook and check the website for upcoming activities and events for the spring and summer!

Submitted by: Marty Sitler, *Director*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Vernon is starting to work on its 2022 Sustainable CT certification. In 2019, Vernon was one of 19 towns to become Silver Certified. The town departments worked together to complete several actions to work toward a more sustainable town.

Previous achievements include: optimize for equity, which included the Energy Improvement District Board encouraging local building owners to access CPACE (clean energy) financing; support of brownfield sites where there has been consistent work on getting old mills up and running; sustainable purchasing; encouraging local commercial property owners to reduce energy consumption with clean energy improvements; arts and cultural programs for the youth of Vernon; the installation of a new electric car charger at the Senior Center; and a composting program.

Some of these areas will be the focus for 2022 Certification, as well as new initiatives including: efforts to

end homelessness; equity training; enhancing pollinator pathways through education and reducing insecticides. Communities that earn the Sustainable CT designation strive to be thriving, resilient, collaborative, and forward-looking; build community and their local economy; equitably promote the health and well-being of current and future residents; and respect the finite capacity of the natural environment.

The town leaders think this certification is a wonderful opportunity to collaborate not only within the town, but with its residents, businesses and community as a whole. While working toward the 2022 Silver Certification will be challenging in light of the current pandemic restrictions, the town feels that we can become compliant for 2022, and with everyone's efforts, Vernon will receive the recognition it deserves to continue to be a sustainable community.

Submitted by: Shaun Gately, *Coordinator*

In January 2021, Emergency Management Director, Michael Purcaro said, "We are moving heaven and earth with our Mayor and our team that we've assembled to get vaccine into the arms of people who are qualified and who want it. Getting to that point takes a lot of communication, people working outside of their normal daily job duties, partnerships with ECHN, North Central District Health Department, Primary Urgent Care of Ellington, and many volunteers from our community, including surrounding communities. We rolled up our sleeves and got to work, so our community could roll up their sleeves for the life-saving vaccine. Here is a quick look from behind the scenes of the vaccine clinics.

Selecting the location was the easy. Our Senior Center had been used frequently for our American Red Cross Blood Drives during the pandemic, and the layout allowed for appropriate social distancing. Many lives had already been saved by the hundreds of blood units collected from our community through our blood drives over the last year.

The Vernon Regional Call Center was created in the Rockville Public Library by the Data Processing staff and Public Works Department. The room was wired from scratch for a dozen phones with the phone number (860) 896-4568. Public Works ensured proper barriers were in place for the safety of our staff and volunteers. Acting Social Services Director Michelle Hill was the lead Supervisor for the Call Center. If you phoned the call center to make a vaccination appointment, your call may have been answered by a social services department employee, a police officer, a school employee or an employee from one of our partner towns.

Human Resources posted a "job" for volunteers resulting in over 100 people looking to volunteer for our clinics. Volunteers were background checked, and credentials verified for those seeking to be vaccinators. Countless

other members from the medical community assisted, with people being either trained by Lt. Luke Gallant, or having the credentials to vaccinate for our clinics. You may have received your vaccine from a dentist, a community firefighter or a school nurse.

Fire Marshal Daniel Wasilewski managed and scheduled vaccinators for each clinic. Director of Parks & Recreation Marty Sitler and Assistant Director Amy Watt managed and scheduled staff and volunteers such as greeters who would take your temperature, check you in, assist with paperwork, or get you to the vaccination area. Senior Center Director Maureen Gabriele and Program Coordinator Susan Ward ensured all was well with every person in the building by assisting in monitoring after vaccination, putting together gift bags for those being vaccinated, and ensuring people who came by Dial-A-Ride and Uber found their driver for the ride home as examples. EMS Coordinator, Jean Gauthier, brought a wellness component to those being monitored after their vaccine. Lt. William Meier directed the operations and coordinated vaccine orders, ensuring first and second doses of Moderna were in supply.

Countless others were involved with entering data to the State website, calling people to re-schedule vaccines, accommodate vaccine preference, coordinating Uber and Dial-A-Ride services, and lastly, working in the field to bring vaccines to homebound individuals, mobile home communities, and local businesses, to name a few. All told, each vaccine clinic requires dozens of people from multiple Town departments and volunteers working together. In just three short months, thousands of people have been vaccinated through our coordinated approach. All of us are thankful to be part of this historic life-saving effort. This is your hometown. This is Vernon.

Submitted by: Dawn Maselek, *Assistant Town Administrator*

BULKY, continued from p. 17

mulch for \$60. Only cash or checks made out to "Town of Vernon" are accepted. Mulch will be delivered onto driveways only at a location clearly marked by the resident. Interested parties should call the Public Works Office at 860-870-3500 to schedule a delivery.

Mulch will continue to be available at the Transfer Station to Vernon residents free of charge. A permit and punchcard are not required. The Transfer Station is located on

Hockanum Boulevard and is open Wednesdays and Saturdays 8 am to 4 pm and Sundays noon to 4 pm.

BULKY ITEM PICKUPS - The Public Works Department offers a program where residents can call to schedule a bulky item pickup for a fee. Pickups are done every Wednesday.

1. Schedule - Residents can call the Public Works Department at 870-3500 from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Friday to schedule a pickup.
2. Payment - Payment must be

received by end of day on Monday. Only cash or checks made out to "Town of Vernon" are accepted. The fee for an area of space 7' square by 4' high is \$45, freon units (A/Cs, refrigerators, freezers, dehumidifiers) are an additional charge.

3. Items must be placed curbside no earlier than Tuesday (24 hours in advance).
4. Items are picked up on Wednesday.

The Strong Family Farm Store opens for business for our 6th season. Last year in spite of or perhaps because of the Covid-19 shutdown, we had our best year yet. Let's make 2021 better!

Here are 10 reasons to support your local community farm store:

- 1** – Every dollar spent goes to support the farm
- 2** – Only sells Connecticut grown or produced items
- 3** – 10% discounts on Sundays for members that identify themselves
- 4** – Friendly, helpful staff
- 5** – We are open when the area farmers markets are closed
- 6** – Safe, clean and spaced area following all COVID-19 guidelines
- 7** - We welcome comments, requests and complaints to make the store better
- 8** - We take credit cards
- 9** - You can take a break and sit



Photo by farm photographer Dan Villeneuve.

and watch the chickens or pet Lilly the farm cat.

10 - Royal ice cream sandwiches, Hosmer Soda, Fish Family Farm milk, LuAnn's Bakery items, Jeff's Kettle Corn, local farm fresh vegetables and fruits, Walt's Bees local (some behind the barn!) raw honey, local maple syrup, farm pickles, relishes and jams, and much more!

Store hours are Wednesday thru

Friday 1-5, Saturday 10-2 and Sunday 11-3.

The past year has been challenging, but farmers have always faced challenges. Besides the store, we were able to continue some of our regular programs and will do them this season as well. These include the Backyard Chicken Program, Raised Bed Gardening, the Scarecrow Contest and a virtual Chicken Run.

For the 2021 season, we moved the live Chicken Run to September 5 and have scheduled our Harvest Festival for Saturday, October 16. And later this summer the Dionysus Theater Company will be doing an outdoor play at the farm.

So fingers crossed and shots received, we expect to have an almost normal year. Check our website at StrongFamilyFarm.org for the latest updates and to sign up for our email newsletter that comes out the beginning of each month. AND get involved and become a member to support your community farm!

VERNON GREENWAY VOLUNTEERS

Vernon Greenways Volunteers Receives Grant

The **Vernon Greenways Volunteers** (GVV) organization was awarded a matching grant from the Sustainable CT Community Match Fund for the repair of the Tankerhoosen Bridge on the Rockville Extension of the Rail Trail between Maple Avenue and Route 30, and to install a railing on the steps to the suspension bridge designed by Town Engineer David Smith.

The original idea was to fund half of the \$2,600 needed to remove and replace all of the wooden boards on the Tankerhoosen Bridge, which were deteriorating. A fund drive via internet and Facebook yielded more than \$3,000, allowing



The new Tankerhoosen River bridge. Photo by Don Bellingham.

for the project to include the suspension bridge railing.

The railing was necessary because there are only a few upright stones to use for balance next to the steps, and there are those who feel uncomfortable on the climb. This bridge is meant to be accessible to all. The fund agreed to the projects as they are consistent with the premise of improving the sustainability, equity and vibrancy of Vernon.

The Tankerhoosen Bridge was repaired in a two-day installation that included Vernon Parks and Recreation Department and the Vernon Greenways Volunteers. The

On Bolton Road above Valley Falls Farm a giant oak stood in the field above the farm, where for centuries it provided shade in the summer for farm animals and was resplendent with color in the fall.

Sadly, the large oak tree had to be removed this spring. In 2019 an arborist declared its end as it had been ravaged by the gypsy moth infestation for three straight years, and would not recover. Though half its limbs were dead, he thought it might stand for a few more years. However, the drought of last summer was a final blow, and the Friends of Valley Falls made the difficult decision to have it removed. Distinctive Tree Service of South Windsor did the 'dirty deed' with skill and precision. It took two days to remove the entire tree.

Often painted and photographed, the tree has been an iconic sentinel,



Left: The oak in it's winter glory. Photo by Tom Ouellette. Right: Showing it's age over the summer field. Photo by Ann Letendre.

standing guard over the farm behind the 1850 farmhouse. Artists and photographers captured its image in every season of the year. How many years had it lived in this spot? What was the history it witnessed? Our Board members' guesses ranged from 100 to 170 years old. It turned out to be at least 200 years old!

The tree was already 30 years old at the time Anson Lyman purchased

the property and built the farmhouse. It may have even provided shade cover for the grazing '2 horses, 3 cows and 2 oxen' the 1860 census says he owned.

Distinctive Tree cut out a slice of the tree, called a 'cookie,' to show the rings. It was so rotted at the base they had to take the slice further up the tree, so it does not show the full 200-year span. The 'cookie' will be on display at the farm's Heritage Center where the rings will be counted

and labeled to tell the history it has shaded over the years.

This last year has been challenging for us as it was for most of the volunteer nonprofit organizations in Vernon. But we are optimistic we'll be able to once again welcome visitors, and have tentatively scheduled our biannual Artist's Day At Valley Falls Farm for Sunday, August 22.

railing will be installed later this spring.

Vernon Greenways Volunteers was formed to assist the town in the maintenance, enhancement and proper use of its 30+ miles of trails. They are a 110 member group in their 16th year of existence. VGV is self-funded by 20 financial sponsors who donate \$5,000 annually.

Although VGV has been unable to hold their Spring Kickoff Program or Fall Rewards Dinner the past year, work continues on trail maintenance and their 10 plantings. To learn more about VGV visit VernonGreenways.org and consider becoming involved. It's a good way to meet your neighbors and give back for your enjoyment of Vernon's trails.

Refer any question to Don Bellingham at (860) 872-6061 or Vernongreenways@att.net. Member of the Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative.



Steps at the David Smith Bridge. Photo by Don Bellingham.

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If you, a family member, or someone you know, has been injured, please contact us immediately. We want to help you protect your rights and guide you through the legal maze to a successful recovery.



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