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Hazen Union Debate Team Wins Varsity Division at Tournament

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Two days after winning the Vermont Varsity Debate Tournament and defeating reigning state champions Colchester, the two members of the varsity debate team and their coach are doing a post-tournament press blitz. Lew-Smith, 16, is a sophomore; his debate team partner James Tedesco, "almost 18," is a senior. Their coach is David Kelley.

Before the pizza has even come out, the reporter and the three have already had an impromptu mini-discussion about propitiation and whether the current administration of military force policies gives much power to the President, based on the upcoming last debate in Vermont.

Most of the competing schools in the tournament are much larger and, unlike Hazen Union, have had their debate team for decades. Coldchester and Hanover, NH were two schools the Hazen varsity team

took on. Both have over 700 students and almost as many students in tenth grade as Hazen does in all four high-school grades, per US News.

Kelley feels the Hazen debate debate was presented and judged better than most he has been to. "We fed people good, and we had the best judges, by far," he says, listing off the credentials of the judges, many with advanced or multiple degrees from Ivy League or Little Blue schools.

For snacks, Jasper Hill Farm cheeses and Peter's Greens vegetable were available. Tedesco really likes their organic carrots. Lunch was spaghetti. Jasper Hill owner Matt Kohler is happy to help.

"I'm glad we did this," he says. "As for the team, Kelley says I wanted these guys to debate to prepare for a long time because I just thought they'd be a good team. You know, one of the things about being a good team is..."

"Have one of the people all the

work," interrupts Tedesco, which gets laughs all around.

"There's a certain chemistry to teamwork," continues Kelley. "These guys are friends with chemistry and that can make all the differences."

On the day of the debate, Lew-Smith and Tedesco were a little nervous because, while each has a year of experience, it was not in the same year. This is their first year as a team.

The debate took place on Saturday, February 10 in some of Hazen's classrooms. Unexpectedly large snowfall delayed some teams arrival past the scheduled 9:30 a.m. start. The event went until just past 2:30 p.m.

Schools can have varsity debate teams, whose debaters have a year or more of experience, or novice debate teams, which have less. Teams always consist of two members.

SEE DEBATE, 7



The remnants of a barn after fire broke out Feb. 6. The barn on West Woodbury Road was built in 1916 and it owned by Joe Williams. Seven fire departments responded.

Multi-Alarm Fire in Woodbury

by Michael Bielawski

WOODBURY — A storage building wood workshop went up in flames at 2222 West Woodbury Road last Tuesday afternoon. Seven fire departments responded to the scene and put out the fire by evening. Nobody was hurt and no animals were in the structure.

"There's still a part of it up, but it's heavily damaged," Woodbury fire chief Paul Cerutti said. "We were called out around 4:30 in the afternoon to a barn fire, and we have to go all the way around through Hardwick to get to that area, so Hardwick arrived first. When we got on scene, there was

heavy fire inside the barn. We failed to extinguish it in a couple of hours."

He said the last departments could easily leave by around 8 p.m., though some returned in the morning to put out a remaining smoky spot. One fire was out, a fire investigation unit came to the scene to look into what caused the blaze. "The cause ended up being wood stove, and chimney-related. We would call it in our trade a clearance-to-combustible issue with the stove-pipe or chimney, one of which was too close to the wood. There was a failure of some kind and the fire started." Cerutti said there was an insu-

lated part of the building was used as a work space. That is where the wood stove was. He said it is possible that wood had been placed too close to the wood stove. "You want to always make sure that if you have any wood stoves or any heat, that you have proper clearances," he said. "And you always want to make sure that people get a chimney sweep and look at their equipment and make sure that their chimneys are cleaned annually and inspected. He said about 3 feet of clearance between the stove and anything combustible is usually adequate. He said certified chimney sweeps can be found on a list on the Di-

vision of Fire Safety's website at www.vfremont.gov.

Wood stoves are not the only heating systems that should be regularly cleaned and inspected. He said regular fireplace without a stove need annual check-ups and fuel and electric heat systems also need to be properly maintained and used to ensure safety. "Any heating appliance can cause an issue if it's not properly installed or properly maintained," he said. The reason that so many departments responded was due to the isolated location of the fire. "The location is very remote, and water is tough to get to so it

SEE FIRE, 3



The Hazen Varsity Debate Team defeated reigning champion Coldchester to win the Vermont State High School Debate Championships on Saturday, February 10 in Hazen Union. The winning team (left to right): sophomore Elyse Lew-Smith, debate coach David Kelley, and senior James Tedesco.

Wolcott United Methodist Church and Historical Society Celebrate Black History Month

WOLCOTT — The Wolcott United Methodist Church and the Wolcott Historical Society celebrate Black History Month on Friday, February 23, at 6:30 p.m., at the church with an open house and

special program about the life and ministry of George S. Brown. Light refreshments will be served and special music will be provided by Girls Night Out. The show date for the event is February 24.

Brown, an African American missionary in Liberia from 1857 through 1861, lost his preaching credentials in a political battle with the white superintendent of the mission. It was only after his arrival in Vermont that his preaching credentials were restored.

Rev. Brown was the first African American Methodist pastor in the state of Vermont. He gathered a white congregation in Vermont in the mid-1850s, then appointed a group of white men as trustees of their proposed church building, and finally ordered the construction of that building.

Brown came to Wolcott some time in late 1854 or early 1855 to lead a few Methodists who could barely pay the preacher any salary. By the end of the year, they were proposing to support a minister all on their own, and in the spring of 1856, they voted to build a church building, which became a three-year negotiation which still exists today. As far as can be discerned, Rev. Brown stayed through the end of 1857, when ill health forced him to leave the area, leaving the only white United Methodist church in the United States organized and built by African Americans.

When this history was finally uncovered in 2006 and 2007, the church designated the Two Annual Conference as an official historic site of the United Methodist Church. A few years later, the Wolcott UMC and the Wolcott Historical Society applied for a State of Vermont Historic Board's recognition honoring the life and ministry of Rev. George S. Brown. The church subsequently became a state of Vermont African American Heritage Trail.

Is It a Boathouse or a Bunkhouse?

by June Pichel Cook

GREENSBORO — The distinction between two letters in a word makes a lot of difference. The Development Review Board (DRB) pondered the question in its deliberations last week on Maria Wright's and Greg Boester's application to rebuild a boathouse structure within the setback on the property at 151 Birch Lane.

The DRB decision weighed heavily on a significant word. "The issue is clearly the classification of the structure. Is it a bunkhouse or a boathouse or something else?"

If classified as a boathouse, it could be rebuilt on the existing footprint to its present height of 15

feet. If classified as an accessory structure, it could be rebuilt up to a maximum height of 30 feet on the existing footprint.

In its decision last Thursday on Wright's DRB application, the DRB determined that the shoreline structure to be rebuilt is a boathouse and may be rebuilt only as an accessory structure. It can be up to its existing height, 19 ft. 6 in. (19'7"). The existing height is 4 ft. 6 in. (4'7") higher than zoning by the DRB permits, but is grandfathered.

"The location of the structure is the DRB determines that, based on the correspondence, the evidence of this structure is a boathouse and may be rebuilt only as an accessory

structure," the DRB decision stated. DRB 3.

SEE DRB, 3



The Wolcott United Methodist Church was built in 1866.

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New Library Policy Limits Video Game Time

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — In a digital age, with enough small and large screens to make George Orwell roll in his grave, the Jewettville Public Library is taking a stand and setting some limits on the amount of screen time that students can have at the library computers, especially for video games.

"We've really been trying since the beginning of the school year in September to deal with a bunch of boys who come in," library director Lisa Sammet said. "Probably six to ten of them. We tended not to have many more because we

thought that we would be able to serve people. But more and more it was just the boys."

She and the staff began to observe changes in the students' behavior the longer they were in front of the screens. She said other library visitors would notice, too.

"Nothing has helped the situation," she wrote in a press release. "Adults don't belong in the library from the moment school is let out. Families with well-behaved children won't come in. We spend lots of time disciplining these kids and the library staff isn't getting other work done."

SEE GAMES, 7

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