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Library Receives Surprise Bequest of Nearly $500,000

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — The trustees of the Jeudevine Memorial Library have struggled in recent years to gain community support for the construction of an expansion to the library building. That effort may have gotten a surprise boost, courtesy of the bequest of a former Hardwick resident.

Parker Ladd recently passed away in New York City at age 89 and left almost a half-million dollars to the library, which he frequented during his youth.

Library director Lisa Sammet received a phone call in January from a lawyer based in New York who said, "I realize this may sound like a prank, but I'm calling to inform you that the library has been named a beneficiary for a substantial bequest."

The lawyer explained that his client, Ladd, had died in November and had not forgotten the Jeudevine Library when considering how to distribute his wealth.

Ladd was the son of Gerald and Eldred (Bridges) Ladd. He was born in Island Pond and moved to Hardwick a few years later. Ladd joined the Army after graduating from the University of Vermont and traveled to Sweden, where he worked as a bookseller. After briefly moving to Los Angeles, he relocated to New York and began his career at the Charles Scribner's Sons publishing house and became a well-known executive in the publishing industry.

"I have a feeling that he probably used the library a lot, because he ended up working for Scribner's and this was the only library in town during his childhood," Sammet said. "The high school wasn't built yet and the Jeudevine Library had served as a library for both the elementary and Hardwick Academy."

After retiring from Scribner's, Ladd moved to Florida and worked as the producer of the television show Open Book, which featured interviews with authors.

Parker's husband of fifty-three years was international couturier Arnold Scassi, who died in 2015. Parker and Scassi, along with journalist Liz Smith, founded Literacy Partners, Inc., an adult literacy organization that offered free classes to over 25,000 people in New York.

"As a lifelong advocate for literacy and a strong supporter of public libraries, it was said Parker Ladd never went anywhere without a book," Jeudevine Board of Trustees chair Jodi Lew-Smith wrote in a statement. "And if the book he was reading was large, he was known to break it in half to make it more portable."

Lew-Smith explained that the bequest was part of a large IRA account, and the amount allocated for the library was $483,309.

"The trustees and staff of the library are astounded by the generosity of this bequest and committed to putting the funds to good use toward the long-awaited expansion of the historic library," she wrote.

Sammet agreed that the expansion is the prime target for this money.

"It's definitely up to the board what they want to do with it, but it certainly will help in going forward with the expansion."

Sammet said the library is creating a new building committee made up of six community members and two library staff. They are still looking for three more people to join the committee.

"We really want to have a lot of community input," she said.

She added that in addition to the Ladd bequest, there will be a lot more fundraising before any future bond vote to support the addition is proposed.

photo by June Pichel Cook

Flags from 16 nations flow over the Common in a parade last Thursday as the Ski Orienteering World Cup got underway. The event, co-ordinated through the efforts of Adrian Owens and Allison van Akeren, drew 200 participants from countries around the world.

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Governor Phil Scott prepares to tap a maple tree beside the newly-built Green Mountain Technology and Career Center Sugarhouse in Hardwick. The annual ceremonial tree tapping for the 2018 maple season in Vermont this year was held at GMTCC. Watching (from left) are Forestry students Jacob Perry and Kyle McFarlane.

Governor Scott Visits Hardwick to Check Out New Sugar House

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Governor Phil Scott and Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Anson Tebbetts visited the newly-completed sugaring facility at Green Mountain Technology and Career Center's (GMTCC) Hardwick location on Friday.

The facility has been operational for about a week.

"This is part of our tradition and culture here in Vermont," Scott said.

Scott shared how, when he was growing up in Barre, he used to help his neighbors with sugaring. In those days, it involved a lot more work, he said.

"We used to take our snowmobiles up every afternoon to help gather sap, long before the pipelines, obviously," he said. "It's part of something I look back fondly on. I guess if you don't have to do it, then it's a lot of fun. Maybe if you are doing it [to make a living] then it's a little more work … I think it's part of what makes us Vermont."

He noted that Vermont accounts for half of all maple syrup in the nation, over 2 million gallons last year. He said the market is growing, from 1 million taps in 2004 to 5 million taps today.

After his speech, Scott tapped a tree for a photo shoot and then proceeded to the new facility, where boiling was well underway and maple-glazed pastries were on offer. Taking a break from all the work, Ben Nottermann who runs GMTCC's Forestry and Land Management Program, chatted about what this new milestone means.

"This is a game-changer," he said. "It's going to allow us to operate more safely. It's bigger. It will allow students to really flourish and grow into Vermont's maple industry, with greater depth and knowledge about sugaring."

One of his students, Kyle Johnson, commented as well.

"It's nice. The last [sugaring facility] was really small and didn't have a lot of room to move around," he said.

He noted that the evaporator machine in the new building is the same machine from the old building and that they had to take it apart in pieces and haul it the new site.

Rep. Joseph "Chip" Troiano (D-Caledonia-2) of Stannard was among those in attendance. Like Scott, he recalled his years involved in sugaring operations before the work became much more technologically advanced.

"We were not nearly as sophisticated as this," he said of the GMTCC operation.

Anson Tebbetts, Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, spoke about what this facility means for the area.

"This community should be very, very proud of what they've done," he said. "They've grown this program since the late 1970s into a state-of-the-art facility, which is producing high-quality maple syrup. They are learning a craft they

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Town Meeting Voters Approve Hardwick Elementary Budget

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Voters in Hardwick went to the polls at Town Meeting to cast their vote on Hardwick Town School's proposed $4,292,466 budget and passed the proposed FY 19 budget. The results were announced after the Gazette went to press last week, but the Hardwick Town School District budget passed by a better than 2-1 margin, 270 voting yes and 130 voting no.

"The [school] board worked really hard with us," said Hardwick Elementary School Principal Patrick Pennock. "We can still run good solid programs and I'm excited the community supported us."

Pennock says that while some revenues needed to be re-allocated, the result was not as bad as he initially feared when he learned that the elimination of a federal Title Grant had cut $196,000 from the school's funding.

"[The Title Grant] was really benefiting us a lot," says Pennock. "But I'm really excited the board found a way for us to keep our math coach, that we kept that position."

The math coach is one of two "interventionist" positions — the other supports literacy — that were grant-funded. The two coaches work to get students who are behind in those subjects up to speed with their peers, something Pennock says is "so imperative and would have had serious consequences for those kids if we had not been able to keep those positions."

One of Hardwick Elementary's principal goals, as stated by many teachers and Pennock, is to get students on a level playing field from an early age, since the later an intervention is started, the more difficult it is for the student to catch up.

Hardwick Town has also kept a contract with Lamoille County Mental Health to have a mental health clinician available for students.

The school board held its annual meeting immediately before

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School Safety Reviews Face Deadline

by Doug McClure and June Pichel Cook

HARDWICK — On February 14, Nikolas Cruz went on a shooting spree at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida killing 17 people.

On February 16, police arrested Jack Sawyer on suspicion of planning an armed attack on Fair Haven Union High School in Fair Haven, Vermont.

On February 22, Governor Phil Scott ordered all schools in Vermont to complete safety audits by the end of March.

The governor is obviously not alone in his concern. A just-released study by the Giffords Law Center found that sixty percent of high school students fear a mass shooting in their school or community. Guns are now the third-leading cause of death for those under 18, the study says, behind illnesses and accidents.

The Vermont State Police, Vermont Sheriffs and municipal police departments have begun meeting with school officials throughout the state to conduct school safety site assessments," the Governor's office said in a release. "The assessments seek to gather information on current school emergency preparedness planning, training, policies, security systems and school safety practices being used across Vermont. This data will assist the Vermont School Safety Center, school safety partners, communities and school boards in identifying common school emergency preparedness gaps and areas to focus future planning, training, exercise and equipment initiatives."

The release contains a quote from Commissioner of Public Safety Thomas D. Anderson, who says, "When I asked the sheriffs and chiefs of police to assist the Vermont State Police in conducting these assessments, their universal response was 'yes,'" stated Anderson. "During these times of uncertainty, the partnership between our schools and law enforcement is critical to maintaining and reducing the risk of violence in our schools."

One focus of Gov. Scott's plan to tackle the violence is 'extreme risk' legislation designed to prevent people who might be a danger to themselves or others from obtaining firearms legally. The Vermont Senate passed, and the House revised, a bill designed to do just that. The focus is more on mental health than on gun control.

Associate Principal John Craig of Hazen Union High School said "the biggest thing in the approach that we have — and that the supervisory union has — [is] treating this like a public health issue. We work closely with the Hardwick PD and are proactive with the mental health side of things."

Craig says Hazen Union has two mental health clinicians under the auspices of Lamoille County Mental Health that work closely with students, administrators and staff, and that this was one item that was never on the table during budget discussions.

"We weren't going to budge on

See SAFETY, 7

New Hazen Principal Reflects on Transition to New Community

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Now that the dust has settled from the selection process for the new Hazen Union principal, David Perrigo has taken some time from his work as principal at Sizer School in Massachusetts to reflect on his plans for moving forward as Hazen's new principal.

One of his first promises during his final presentation to the public, before being chosen for the job, was he would make every attempt to get integrated into the community. According to the staff at the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) office, he has been seen around town doing just that.

"I got to spend three days down at Hazen [during his vacation week], which allowed me to do a bunch of things and learn a substantial amount about the school and the community, but not nearly what one needs to know before you start to make significant decisions about things," Perrigo said.

He said he hopes to make more trips to Hardwick before the end of the school year to continue the process of getting a feel for the town, so he can be prepared for his start date in June.

"I really do feel that the community itself has a lot of positive energy that can be mobilized to try to aid in this continued revitalization. I'm very enthusiastic and very much looking forward to this," said Perrigo.

He said that, so far, his feeling is that the perception of the school has been up and down as of late.

"I think that the school is on an upswing and I would really like to be able to contribute to that upswing, so the community feels it's a place they can be proud of."

Perrigo said that he has heard that some people are concerned about the number of families

See PRINCIPAL, 6

Hazen Budget Passes 385-210

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — The proposed Hazen School Budget was approved, 385-210, comfortably passing after last year's initial budget was voted down.

This year's budget of $6,520,012 represents a drop of $279,573 over last year, with just one major change: an administrative restructuring.

Going forward, Hazen will no longer have an associate principal and a principal. Neither man at the helm today will be in those positions, with the retirement of Dr. Jack McCarthy as interim principal and the elimination of the associate principal job John Craig holds.

McCarthy says he never intended his position to be long-term, but he wanted the experience of working directly with the students once more, after years in administrative positions.

Both McCarthy and Craig seem confident that they have done their best. It is clear both are impressed with the students and the staff they have helped develop and mentor over the years. McCarthy spoke

See HAZEN, 5

First Fridays in Jeopardy May Downscale Event

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — In the first select board meeting after Town Meeting Day, there was a brief agenda that highlighted the shaky status of First Fridays.

The monthly summer street festival has been organized for the first Friday of every month, from May to September. Each First Friday features craft and food vendors, live music and community activities on Main Street from late afternoon to early evening.

Board member Danny Hale noted that they had a bit of bad luck last year.

"You had a couple of good ones last year, but then you had a couple of bad weather events," he said.

Board member Sheri Cornish, who helps coordinate the event, commented that there's talk of down-scaling.

"The general idea is that it's going to change to a single event, instead of having to advertise and create [multiple] events," she said. "But we're still talking about it and we would love to have more input."

Cornish suggested that this year's event may be held on a Saturday.

Hale, who is executive director of

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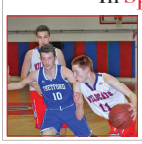
In Sports



Lady Cats' Run Ends at the 'Aud' In Barre

Thornburn Leads Thetford Past Wildcats

Blue Devils Advance Over Twinfield Trojans