



Christopher Bagley and Zachary Hubbard inspect a deer's skull as a part of the Four Winds Nature Institute.

Environmental Learning for the Future

by Doug McClure and Jerina Page

HARDWICK - Hardwick Elementary School (HES) students enjoy the benefits of two separate environmentally-oriented educational programs: Four Winds and ECO (Educating Children Outdoors).

"Both programs are great," says HES Principal Patrick Pennock. The Four Winds Nature Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides its own community-based natural science curriculum on many different topics. K-5 students are currently learning from the section called Ecosystems: Discovering Connections in the Natural World.

After a brief training session led by coordinator Peggy Sprague, community volunteers present a monthly topic, often outdoor-based and hands-on. The topic for the day recently in Nate Deane's fifth-grade class was white-tail deer. Volunteers Jennifer Fingelman and Peggy Newfield led the session.

The class began with a traditional classroom-style session on the background of deer where the teachers instructed and the students listened. The program then moved on to a puppet show which reinforced some of the earlier teaching. The puppet show characters explained how squirrels, deer, saplings and coyotes interact and successfully survive winter. Then the students were quizzed on what they'd learned so far, and the class was divided into groups, each at a station dealing with a specific topic to help them learn about deer. One station focused on the height and length a deer could jump, one on how much food a deer eats to survive winter and one on the amount of fat and how the fat supply regulates the size of the deer population in an area.

With actual objects such as fur, skull and bones and a scale, students discovered the metrics of a deer's life. Principal Pennock stepped by and visited the stations one-by-one, participating in the activities.

The program plan was to include an outdoor section of a game of tag between deer and predators. Student Jayden Brochu said he would rather do that than recess, and soon enough almost the entire class was taking place in a lesson instead of playing tag recess.

Ella Renard, 11, said she loved the program and thought it was valuable education.

"It teaches us about nature and the outdoors," she said.

Ethan Gunn, 11, had a more elaborate explanation of what the program meant for him. Right now, his aspiration is to become an inventor or engineer, and he said the program is important for that goal.

"It helps a lot because it explains how things work. I like how it's interactive," he said. "We got to touch stuff. The games are fun. The teachers are really nice and I learn stuff. Like deer are robots with fur."

The ECO (Educating Children Outdoors) program is a partnership between HES and the North Branch Nature Center. Its focus is helping teachers and youngsters create a relationship with nature in general and specifically with the rich environment Vermont provides.

ECO supports teachers in taking and teaching the existing science, math and literacy curriculum outside every week for one-half to a full day. Teachers attend a week-long summer training session with ECO naturalist Ken Benton, who also consults with the teachers once a month. Currently grades K, 1, 5 and 6 are in the program.

Act 46 Dominates Lakeview Meeting

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO - Voters passed all articles at the Lakeview Union annual meeting held March 14.

The school budget was presented as if Lakeview would continue operating as usual to ensure the school opening in August - no matter what happens with the possible upcoming July 1 bond merger.

The cost per pupil will rise by 11.22 percent over last year, resulting in spending \$18,806 per equalized pupil. This is a significantly higher increase than the projected state average, which is in the range of three to four percent. The total Lakeview budget for FY 2020 will be \$1,453,384.

The public passed a measure to transfer any unobligated year-end fund balances to a reserve fund created to be used specifically for building maintenance and repairs at Lakeview Union. There were questions raised about whether the extra money would really be safe from the whim of the new district once it is put in the fund.

Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) Superintendent Joanne LeBlanc stated that "it is the statute that whatever you set up for a reserve belongs to the entity that set up the reserve. So even if you don't spend it all, it can only be spent for the Greensboro and Stannard students." She continued, "Let's say that you

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Burlington-based attorney Brooks G. McArthur (inset table, black suit) of Jarvis, McArthur & Williams provides Superior Court Judge Megan Shevitz with an update. Seated to his left is Colby Costello, who faces charges including gross negligent driving with death resulting and driving under the influence of a drug with death resulting in the July 20, 2018 crash that killed Wolcott's 19-year-old Dexter C. Thurston.

Costello Lawyers Give Status Update

by Doug McClure

HYDE PARK - On March 13 at a status conference, lawyers for Colby Costello gave the judge an update on their progress in preparing his case. Costello is accused in the July 20, 2018 fatal wreck which took the life of 19-year-old Dexter Crowley Thurston of Wolcott.

Prosecutors have laid charges against Costello including gross negligent driving with death resulting and driving under the influence of a drug with death resulting. Police say Costello had opioids in his system - buprenorphine - as well as alprazolam (Xanax) - and was driving 80 mph in a 50 mph zone when he crossed the center line on Route 12 just south of the Elmers store and struck Thurston's 2001 Subaru head-on, killing him. Also in Thurston's car was 11-year-old Deacon Slayton, who escaped with minor physical injuries.

Costello has pleaded not guilty to these charges, and despite the state's efforts, has not been remanded into custody but placed in the custody of his mother, with whom he does not live. Costello is living with his grandfather in another town. He has been under court-ordered curfew and is prohibited from driving.

Speaking for Costello's defense was Brooks G. McArthur of the Burlington-based law firm Jarvis, McArthur & Williams, with the firm's Paul D. Jarvis seated

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ATV Ordinance Moves Forward

by Jane Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY - Last week's Select Board meeting with Lt. Walter Smith from the State Police Derby barracks drew a crowd of 35 people to hear law enforcement's view of ATVs on town roads. The board is working on an ordinance to expand opening town roads for ATVs, in addition to the Collinsville and Hatch Roads that are now open.

Smith alluded to Title 23, Chapter 81 as the overriding state statute governing ATVs. At the outset, Smith emphasized, "We are not in the business to police a town ordinance. The state police role and involvement is minimal if you have an ordinance."

The state police respond to fatal accidents, serious injury accidents and property damage that is over \$100, colliding with a car, but not to nuisance calls of noise or similar complaints, Smith said. "We don't respond to those. If you pass an ordinance, you have to contract with the sheriff's de-

partment; that is the town's decision. We just don't have the resources. If you want that type of law enforcement, you would have to contract with the sheriff's department. If someone destroys their own ATV, we won't get involved," he explained.

ATVs are not allowed on state roads such as VT Route 14. The question was raised if it could be possible to allow ATVs on Route 14 from Collinsville Road to Post Road.

Smith replied, "That is something you should discuss with the AOT (Agency of Transportation). I'm not aware of any leniency." Penelope Doherty asked if specific language could be put in an ordinance to give "peer pressure more teeth in local permitting." Smith said that occasionally the state police may get a call about an individual and sometimes is involved with having a conversation with parents or the individual to address complaints.

He continued, "When there are these nuisance calls with kids,

whether ATVs or snowmobiles, that is counter to their safety, a good conversation with their parents may happen. We like to get involved."

Several towns, in opening roads, issue a permit to residents only; in other communities, permits are issued to non-residents and residents. Danville currently has a permitting process for ATVs. After discussing the concept of a permitting process, a show vote showed the attendees were evenly divided as to the desirability of issuing permits.

Improving visibility and operators wearing reflective vests, helmets and other safety features were noted as things that could be in a permit. Smith said the permitting process has a benefit as it helps in regulations and improve safety rules and "would be a way for the town to regulate."

Carol Maroni spoke about Geham, N. H., and a pending lawsuit because of the ATV increased traffic, loss of property value and

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Hazen Union students and faculty line up across the swinging bridge in Hardwick after a planned climate change walkout from school Friday.

Hazen Students Walk Out Over Climate Change

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK - In solidarity with schools worldwide, Hazen high school students walked out to protest climate change on March 15.

Over four dozen students joined in the march, which began at Hazen Union and worked its way down into the village, ending at the pedestrian bridge downtown. Many carried signs in support of the cause. They walked past the village store before crossing the road and gathering at the bridge. Some Hardwickians made sure to give the students a thumbs up and express support. Buffalo Mountain Co-Op staff cheered the marchers on.

Friday's walkout is the second in as many years that students have held, with support from the Hazen Union administration, to try and raise awareness over issues that affect them. The first walkout was nearly a year ago, as part of March For Our Lives in support of gun control, after the school shooting in Lakeside, Fla.

Kai Gilbert, 17, was the primary organizer for Hazen's walkout. She had quite a bit to say about what she feels is a problem with "devaluing" consequences that would be felt most by her generation and called the situation "dira."

Gilbert said she also felt strongly that lowering the voting age was important, something gaining traction slowly at a national level. She feels that people her age will be the first generation to feel the impacts of climate change in what Gilbert described as "the taster trial of a world." She said a number of younger people she knows want to be the changemakers who try to course-correct and get things back on track to "both benefit us and the world."

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Hazen Union students, from left front, Elana Brochu, Gabrielle Stancu, Lily Costello and Chloe Laffin. In back left is Hailey Larphiere and back right is Erin Norman. The students display their signs on climate change in Hardwick after a planned walkout from school Friday in a worldwide protest for climate change.

Wolcott Takes Steps Toward Hiring Town Administrator

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT - At a special select board meeting on March 13, the Wolcott select board re-grouped from ten days of tension.

The select board brought in consultant Duncan Hastings, a former town administrator of Johnson and Georgia. Hastings presented a seven-step process to get to a goal of hiring a town administrator, but it was primarily a framework for a nearly-two-hour discussion among the select board, town clerk Linda Martin and citizens in attendance.

Hastings broadly described the new town administrator position as not just a bridge between the town clerk and select board, but also a public interface for the select board. He pointed out that one issue is that Martin is considered the public interface for the town, but that really isn't the primary role of a town clerk and is disruptive to her performing her job.

He stated the key first steps are identifying the type of position for the new role, its tasks and duties, and a full job description. Larger towns have a town manager position and that position's responsibilities are codified in Vermont statute. A town administrator's job description does not. The duties of that job therefore must be very explicit, and the focus first should be making sure this step is done correctly.

"If you don't get this right the first time," cautioned Hastings, "That's going to be a big problem."

Some frustration expressed among all present was the lack of public understanding of the organizational structure of the town: who does what? The select board acknowledged that lack of understanding was inadvertently reinforced to some extent by the fact that Martin has done with a job a lot more than called for over three decades in her job. Select Board Chair Eric Fure

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PIE BREAKFAST BRINGS
COMMUNITY TOGETHER

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CARIN FEVER
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