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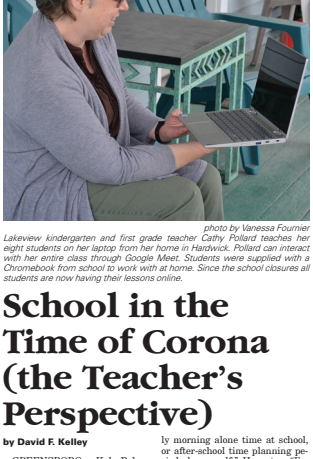

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Lakeview kindergarten and first grade teacher Cathy Pollard teaches her eight students on her laptop from her home in Hardwick. Pollard can interact with her entire class through Google Meet. Students were supplied with a Chromebook from school to work with at home. Since the school closures all students are now having their lessons online.

School in the Time of Corona (the Teacher's Perspective)

by David F. Kelley

GREENSBORO – Kyle Behrsing teaches English at Hazen Union High School. He has a daughter and another child on the way, and like so many others, he is finding that the shelter-in-place lifestyle imposed by the COVID-19 health care crisis can be a blessing and a curse. Now that he is at home full time with his wife, who is also a teacher, and caring for their soon-to-be two-year-old, his free time has drastically dropped. Kyle remarks, that one of the unanticipated consequences for teachers is actually having less time to themselves.

Behrsing observes, "I don't have alone time in my car to plan, early morning alone time at school, or after-school time planning periods by myself." He notes, "I'm also finding out how easily I get distracted by my amazing daughter." But then he concedes "It's a big plus to be able to spend more than a couple hours a day with her during the week."

According to multiple teachers, these circumstances pose a much greater challenge for some students than others. According to Leanne Harple, another teacher at Hazen Union, "While some are thriving in this new learning environment, others are still struggling."

Harple goes on to say, "Not everyone has good technology, and

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OSUED to Submit Learning Plan for Shutdown

by Emmett Avery

HARDWICK – The board of the Orleans Southwest Union Elementary District (OSUED) met remotely on April 8. The meeting ran full length and included an executive session, discussions about staffing, sports programming, and an update from Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union superintendent Adam Rosenberg.

Rosenberg, giving the board his monthly superintendent's report, said that the state required the district to present a "continuity of learning plan" for the time that in-person schooling is shut down. He said that the plan will shift the focus from maintenance of learning, with teachers mostly just checking in on kids, to online learning. "Really a lot more folks than we anticipated do have [internet] access," Rosenberg said, "but some don't, and some live on that last mile," where even if they wanted to get internet access, they might not be able to. Rosenberg said he is working on the "Vermont Superintendents Association level to try to lobby for companies to really have a plan [in place to provide that [internet] service."

The continuity of learning plan, according to Rosenberg, is a continuation" of a lot of the work that the schools were already pushing for earlier in the year: flexible pathways, proficiency-based learning, and personalized learning plans. "If there were ever a time to focus on learner agency, this is it," Rosenberg said, "because our kids are at home, in some cases all alone, and they need to be self-directed." In response to a question from board member Samantha Friend, Rosenberg said that the schools would provide hard copies of work material to those who could not access the online resources.

In response to a question from recently-appointed board member Orise Ainsworth, Rosenberg said that all staff are currently

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State Scraps Goddard College Hospitalization Plan

by Michael Bielawski

PLAINFIELD – As the number of hospitalizations and deaths due to the coronavirus continue to occur below early projections, a plan to house up to 100 COVID-19 patients in vacant housing at the Goddard College campus is no longer going to happen.

Kerry Sleeper, Vermont's commissioner for the Department of Public Safety, sent a message announcing the new development.

"As a result of reviewing the very latest Covid19 case load and related modeling, I have determined that the State does not require the bed capacity that Goddard offered as a potential site," he wrote. "All our decisions to identify potential surge sites were premised on ensuring we could meet the isolation needs of recovering Vermonters given the projected worse-case scenario."

The most recent estimates from the Vermont Department of Health state that between 44 and 100 Vermonters will die from the virus by the end of the summer. By comparison, in 2018 according to the CDC, there were 87 deaths from the regular flu. Sleeper indicated that these new estimates will be more manageable.

"Case numbers and new modeling early this week suggested that Vermont was beginning to fall into a more moderate rate of infection," he wrote. "This new data is reason for cautious optimism in the crisis management process, and a recognition that Vermonters are taking the self-isolation role seriously and limiting the spread of the virus.

"Based on the data I am currently seeing I have asked building and general services not to engage in a contract with Goddard. I want to be careful not to project the idea that we have resolved this health crisis, we all have a lot of work to do over the next several weeks."

In the weeks leading up to a decision to use the college for the patients, the community engaged in a couple of public forums at which some residents expressed skepticism that this plan would be safe for neighboring families. Some top concerns included what the backgrounds of these patients were and what kind of security would be on campus to keep them from wandering off.

Sleeper said he sympathizes with these concerns.

"I want to commend you for your stewardship and advocacy on behalf of the Plainfield community; you were placed in a challenging position regarding the Goddard proposal and navigated the process remarkably well," he wrote. "I also want to thank the members of the Plainfield community for their thoughtful feedback during the discussions. Challenging times require thoughtful dialogue, I appreciated all the feedback."

Select board chair Sasha Thayer also shared a message that she wrote in response to the new development.

"These are indeed challenging times and too often frightening to many as it feels as though we are attempting to successfully navigate very turbulent waters in a tiny canoe," she wrote.

"I appreciate the care and thoughtfulness that seems evident across this state, in sorting out under tremendous time pressures how to adequately care for and serve those who are directly affected by the COVID-19 virus, their families, and those in all our communities. There are rarely easy answers to the problems that arise in such times."

The newly-revised estimates by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington predict 60,400 deaths in the nation from the coronavirus, down from previous estimates of between 100,000-to-200,000 deaths. By comparison, since Oct. 1 of 2019, the Center for Disease Control estimates between 24,000 and 63,000 Americans died from the seasonal flu.

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Hundreds of ribbons have been placed by family, friends and customers along the railing in front of Hastings Store in West Danville in memory of Jane Hastings Larrabee, who passed away on March 28. She and her husband Garey owned and operated the store for 45 years from 1974-2019. They sold the store to their daughter Jenny Rafuse in 2019.

Neighbor Taskforce Becomes Official Town Committee

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY – The Craftsbury Neighbor to Neighbor Task Force has been officially sanctioned as a town committee "to aid and support the community during times of distress." The select board designated the volunteer group as an official committee of the town at its meeting last week on Zoom.

Early in March, the committee was spearheaded by board member Susan Houston, who gathered together people representing public spaces, i.e., the library, schools, and business entities. The Neighbor to Neighbor Taskforce sent out postcards to residents letting them know of resources available to help with a range of challenges, from food insecurity to child care to transportation. The town's website has a comprehensive resource guide for anyone seeking assistance and for volunteers to register. The guide was created by board clerk and town website chair Michelle Warren with the assistance of many groups.

Appointments to the task force currently will be for one year, with longer terms set up and staggered. In setting up the committee, the board authorized an account within the current town checking account. Checks for donations to the committee must be written to the Town of Craftsbury with a memo line indicating it is for the task force and/or food.

The board discussed the liability status of volunteers. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns has suggested that volunteers sign an online waiver. Warren reported 30 to 40 people have done this. A waiver form has been posted on the town's website.

Houston has worked with the Craftsbury Community Care Center to secure a grant through the Northern Forest Destination Development Initiative Outdoor Recreation Grants Program. The grant would be used to build an American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant path on the center's property for residents and community members. Houston indicated the ADA trail would dovetail with the Craftsbury Trails Initiative to make outdoor recreation available to all. The Craftsbury Trails

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Greensboro Board Recommends Face Masks, Available at Office

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO – The Greensboro Select Board held a remote meeting on April 8.

Select board chair Peter Romans said that the board had been asked to pass an ordinance mandating the use of face masks in public. "Obviously we can't enforce anything like that," he said, "and the state isn't trying to enforce it." So instead, Romans suggested that the board make a recommendation. The board passed a motion saying, "we recommend face masks in accordance with the Vermont Department of Health recommendations."

Greensboro Town Clerk Kim Greaves said that she and a few others are sewing masks and that they are available at the town offices. People can call ahead and the masks will be available free of charge. Greaves said that she left a box of about 30 masks in front of the town offices for free the night before the meeting. When she got back in the morning, the masks and the box were gone. Greaves said that Romans and herself looked through security camera footage until they found the person who took the masks. It turned out that Greaves had the person's phone number, and so called the individual and explained that the masks were meant for the whole community, and asked the person to please bring back any masks they were not going to use directly as well as the box they were stored in. Later in the day, the person brought 5 of the 30 masks back, as well as the box, according to Greaves. "It's not that I did not want her to have them," Greaves said, "because if anybody needs them, God, that is what they are all for. It's just ... all of them was a little bit of a shock this morning."

The next issue on the agenda had to do with the town health officer. Romans said that under normal circumstances, the town health officer is legally obligated to respond to any complaint. But given the current situation, Greensboro's health officer was looking to have some discretion on non-pressing issues. Romans said that he spoke with a lawyer at the Vermont League of Cities and Towns who said that the governor's order prohibiting all non-critical activity and postponing all nonessential medical procedures should give health officers discretion over which cases they respond to at the current time.

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photo by Doug McClure

On Friday, March 13, Hazen Academy student Madison Langdell and artist/entrepreneur Ezra Ranz-Schleifer assembled one of the Academy's new 3D printers. Just weeks later the 3D printer was pressed into service in the fight against COVID-19 to produce face shields for UVM Medical Center.

Hazen Academy's 3D Printers Put to Lifesaving Use

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – When the students at Hazen's Artisan and Entrepreneurship Academy received their new makerspace equipment over winter break, they were excited to start putting the machines together with consulting artisan/entrepreneur Ezra Ranz-Schleifer. When interviewed on Friday, March 13, the students working on the new equipment had no idea everything about their lives would change over the weekend. And they never would have anticipated the important and vital role these printers are playing now.

The Hazen Academy took its cues from Burlington-based Generator Makerspace in setting up their own Hazen-based community makerspace. Now, drawing on resources across the state, Generator is using its 3D printers and other machines to fabricate face shields and intubation boxes for hospitals across the state. Ranz-Schleifer estimated about 4,000 face shields have been produced by Generator so far.

3D printers produce the critical bands required for those face shields and have been the main bottleneck to ramping up production at Generator. The specific 3D printer models proving useful are made by Prusa Research, a Czech-based firm that open-sourced its design files for the lifesaving face shields in early March. Ranz-Schleifer said the "open source design from Prusa was adapted to suit UVM Medical Center requirements" in the initial cooperative effort between UVMMC and Generator starting in late March. Since those early days, Generator's equipment has gone to hospitals around the state, including Copley Hospital in Morrisville.

Ranz-Schleifer has two Prusa printers and the Hazen Academy just received two right before everything began to shut down. With those two additional printers sitting "unused indefinitely" at Hazen, he contacted Academy Coordinator Hilary Maynard and teacher Arne Hagman about possibly drafting the printers in the Vermont fight against COVID-19. Ranz-Schleifer realized Hazen's printers would double his ability to produce the key component for Generator. Hagman and Maynard said they were very enthusiastic about it, and Ranz-Schleifer picked up the printers to finish their assembly.

Right now, with the four printers running about nine hours per day, Ranz-Schleifer is able to produce 30-40 components per day, which he said so far adds up to roughly 550 produced.

He said "3D printing was and still is the main bottleneck. With these printers I have here we are producing [about] 25% of the total output for the whole state." He said that while Greensboro's Spark Makerspace also has a 3D printer that is drafted into service in the fight, that printer has a "more limited role, as it has different qualities that lend itself better to other forms of printing."

He added a need exists for anyone who has Prusa printers. "If anyone in the area has an excellent condition working Prusa 3D printer they should get in touch with me (ezra@geilx.com) or Generator [generatorvt.com/donate/] to inquire about how they can contribute to the effort."

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Hardwick Area Food Pantry (HAFP) volunteers Terry and John Tuthill of Hardwick check the boxes that will be carried outside to families as they come to pick up their supplies of food. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, there is a 120% increase in individuals served. The director of HAFP is Lauralee Sweeney and the pantry is open Monday noon to 2 p.m., Thursday 9-11 a.m. and Saturday 9-11 a.m.