



VERNON VOICE



WINTER 2023

FIGHT THE WINTER BLUES with GOOD MUSIC and GOOD NEWS.



Drone photo
by Tyler Gagnon

Now in its 28th year, Jacob's Well Christian Coffeehouse is held on First Fridays at The Oasis, the cozy renovated 1800s storefront next to Union Church. Upcoming artists include Patrick O'Connors on February 6, Bob Stanhope on March 3, Kira Shcherbakova on April 7, Marquis Laughlin on May 5 and Olivia Lane on June 2. Admission and refreshments are free. Or, you may watch the live stream on YouTube or rebroadcasts on the Community Voice Channel. For more information, visit JacobsWellCoffeehouse.com today.

If you don't have a church home, you can also find good music and good news at Union Church every Sunday during the 10 am worship service in the beautiful Union Church sanctuary. Or, you can watch the live stream on Facebook or the rebroadcasts on the Community Voice Channel. For details, visit UnionChurch.community today.



Visit VernonBusinessDirectory.com today!



KEEP IN TOUCH (DrumUpBiz.com) has been headquartered at Lafayette Square for 28+ years. Over 30 small businesses are based at this bustling business district at Routes 30 & 31 near I-84 Exit 67. Please support your local Vernon businesses.



Drew Crandall, President



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 ATTORNEYS

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

First and foremost, let me wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year! It's been a good year in Vernon. We continue to move forward and I hope you have seen our progress in your travels around town.

This is the final edition of the Vernon Voice for 2022. This edition includes a variety of historical articles as well as general information about the town. We have included a list of all the departments and their phone numbers for your use.

Our community is built on resident involvement and there is a way you can help Vernon. We need volunteers to serve on our municipal boards and commissions. Volunteers help us move our community forward and help plan our future. I hope you will consider volunteering.

This magazine is a perfect opportunity to share updates on some of our current projects. The renovation of Citizen Block is moving forward. Eventually, this historic building on Park Place will house the Ellington Probate Court and all of our Land Use departments. The building is expected to be ready by early 2024. We will provide further updates in future magazines. We are also making tremendous progress on the soccer fields on Windermere Avenue. Contractors and our Public Works, Parks and Recreation

and Engineering Departments have completed three fields with work on a fourth planned soon. The grass has come in nicely on fields 1, 2 and 3. The cleanup of Daniel's Mill is progressing as we work on our Rockville redevelopment project. New this winter, we'll have a skating rink in Henry Park. When temperatures are cold enough, the rink will be open for all to use. Lights will be provided for night time skating as well. We have gone to bid on a replacement project for Horowitz Pool, for new dash and body cameras for the Police Department, and for the rehabilitation and restoration of our historic Fox Hill Tower. Many more projects are in the works and we will continue to provide updates in future issues.

We are fortunate to have hardworking and talented town employees always preparing for the next challenge or project.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Mayor and I pledge to continue our progress in 2023!

Happy New Year!



Daniel A. Champagne
Mayor, Town of Vernon



Students at Vernon's Maple Street School Again Win 'Superintendent's Challenge' by Creating Most Cards for Veterans

Students at Vernon's Maple Street School again won the annual Superintendent's Challenge by creating the most hand-made cards for local veterans to mark Veterans Day.

Maple Street students created 251 cards, the most per capita in the district. In total Vernon students created 1,449 cards for veterans. For several years, Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary has issued the challenge to students to create cards to honor our nation's veterans. The cards are distributed to vets at the Veterans Home and Hospital in Rocky Hill, through local nursing homes, veterans' organizations and to restaurants that serve free meals to veterans on Veterans Day.



Air Force Technical Sergeant Tyler Lesniak, right, who is the father of a Maple Street School student, speaks with Maple Street School Fourth Grader Hunter Neff, who was wearing his grandfather's Air Force uniform shirt, speak during a Veterans Day program at Maple Street School.

"Helping our students develop an understanding of Veterans Day and an appreciation of the service of our veterans is important," Dr. Macary said. "The students at Maple Street School have done a great job over the past several years and in the process developed a better understanding of the sacrifices veterans make." Dr. Macary honored the students on Veterans Day and was joined by Mayor Dan Champagne and several veterans, including Air Force Technical Sgt. Tyler Lesniak, the father of a Maple Street fourth grader. Lesniak recently returned from an overseas deployment.

Veterans Day falls on November 11th each year, and marks the armistice that ended World War I

See **CHALLENGE**, p. 9



LET OUR FAMILY TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY.

We don't just run our business. We live in our business. It's a tradition that goes back to 1966 when our grandfather started his own company. The family has evolved and spans three generations of hands-on commitment to our residents, their families and our communities. When it comes to our Assisted Living Communities and Home Health Agency, we know the importance of family, and we are a family looking out for yours.



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The Town of Vernon marked the annual Wreaths Across America Day on Dec. 18 by honoring those who have served in the armed forces at Lugg Memorial Field at historic Grove Hill Cemetery.

The annual commemoration in Vernon features veterans, flags and the laying of wreaths to honor veterans of each branch of the armed forces.

Across the nation, wreath ceremonies take place at noon at more than 3,000 cemeteries, including Arlington National Cemetery near Washington.

Vernon's Grove Hill Cemetery is the final resting place of men and women who served our nation from the Civil War through today.

"Grove Hill Cemetery is sacred ground and it is only fitting that we

conduct our Wreaths Across America ceremony there each year," Mayor Dan Champagne said. "We pause to honor fallen service members and those who served. It also gives us an opportunity to teach young people about the sacrifices others have made."

Lugg Memorial Field is a special section of Grove Hill Cemetery set aside for veterans and their spouses.

Wreaths Across America traces its origin to 1992, when Morrill Worcester of the Worcester Wreath Co. of Harrington, Maine, had a number of surplus wreaths as the holiday season was drawing to a close. Recalling a boyhood trip to Washington, D.C., which included a visit to the sacred grounds of Arlington National Cemetery,

Worcester contacted his senator and donated 5,000 wreaths to be placed at headstones in an older section of the cemetery, where visitors were less frequent.

What began as one man's gesture has grown into a national movement. In 2006 Wreaths Across America was formed as a non-profit corporation and works with local organizers on wreath-laying events across the nation. The organization's goal is to show gratitude and appreciation to veterans during the holiday season. For more information, visit: www.wreathscrossamerica.org.

Thank you to Polly Schaefer for sharing the cover photograph with us.

Submitted by: David Owens,
Communication Specialist

TOWN CLERK

Past Celebrations

The Town Clerk's Office wishes all Vernon residents and patrons a happy and healthy New Year. Celebrations in the present often invoke memories of the past. One memorable celebration, lasting a week, was the Centennial Celebration of the Town of Vernon in 1908.

A special town meeting was held in Town Hall on Nov. 29, 1907, at which time resolutions authorizing a centennial celebration were passed by the electors of Vernon. "Old Home Week" was to be a week-long celebration sometime in 1908. An appropriation of \$2,000 was put forth for all expenses incurred for the festivities. The City of Rockville was asked to assist the Town of Vernon in making the celebration a success.

A centennial committee was elected, and after many months of hard work, Sunday, June 28, 1908 commenced the week-long celebration of



Vernon's first 100 years. Private residences, businesses and public buildings all added to the festivities by illuminating the night with colored lights "outlining buildings, festooning streets and parks, making up a veritable 'blaze of glory.'" Central Park was no exception. Pillars were erected with thousands of lights strewn about. Memorial Hall had the word Centennial over the door with "1808" and "1908" flanking each side. Music and Welcome were the themes throughout the week, extending a warm greeting to all those coming home for "Old Home Week".

From June 28 through July 4, activities were planned throughout the day and into the night, culminating with an "electrical display and illuminations." From the official program of Old Home Week, opening events in Vernon Center at Congregational Church included an invocation, welcoming address, a reading of the Act of the General Assembly creating the Town of Vernon by Town Clerk Francis Skinner, and music and other speeches.

The evening ended with the Grand Colonial Ball in Town Hall, a Grand Ball in Turn Hall, Opening of the Electrical Display and Illuminations, a Band Concert, Vaudeville performance, and a Midway on East Main Street. Each day offered activities such as an Automobile Hill-Climb Contest, athletics including foot races, sack races,

See CELEBRATIONS, p. 14



With the holiday season being mostly over, what's to look forward to? Library offerings, of

course! We work constantly to bring you informative, exciting, and fun programming for all ages, all year. So, what's coming up in the next few months? Take a look below. And don't forget to check our website and social media for more.

CHILDRENS:

Collage Club for Kids -

Wednesdays, 1/25, 2/8, 3/22, 4-5 p.m. Experiment with different art materials each session, work toward creating your own amazing art journal. Kids in Grades 3-5 will cut, glue, collage, paint, print, and write to express themselves.

SNAP-ed Cooking Classes -

Thursdays, Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26, 4-5 p.m. Children in Grades 3-5 only. Space is limited. Registration begins Dec. 16 by phone.

Take Your Child to the Library Day -

Sat., 2/4, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Children and caregivers of all ages. Free bookbags and craft buffet.

Perler Bead Play -

Wednesday, 2/22, 4-5 p.m. Come and craft a design out of Perler beads! Ages 6-12. No registration required.

Weave a Basket

Session #1: Thurs., 3/9, 4-5 p.m.
Session #2: Sat. 3/11, 11 a.m.-noon. Come and weave a basket with yarn! Grades 1-6 only. No registration required.

Read to a Therapy Dog -

Saturdays, 1/14, 2/25, 3/25 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Register in-person at the event. Presented by Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs.

Coloring Club & Tabletop Toys -

Anytime! Always Something to Discover!

Drop In, Hang Out in the Children's Department to color, craft, play or build whenever it's convenient for you.

Saturday Series for Families and Children

Jan. 28 - Snap Circuits, 10 a.m.-noon.

Feb. 18 - Playdate @ the Library for Babies, Toddlers & Preschoolers, 10-11 a.m.

March 18 - Bee Bots, 10 a.m.-noon

Exclusively for children birth through age 5

Wow, Walruses! Author Visit with Janet Lawler -

Friday, 1/13, 10:30 a.m. Lawler's WALRUS SONG is a lyrical narrative nonfiction picture book about a unique arctic mammal. Dive right in with busy Walrus as he plays with puffins, lounges on ice, devours clams, and makes lots of noise!

Playdate @ the Library - Babies, Toddlers and Pre-Schoolers -

10-11 a.m. Mondays: 1/23, 2/6, 3/6 and 3/20

Lil' Bookworms Storytime - 10:30 a.m. Wednesdays: 1/18, 2/15, 3/15

1000 Books Before Kindergarten - Birth to Kindergarten

Register anytime. It's never too early to read to your child and develop a love for reading!

TEENS

Tuesdays:

Chess Club (Ages 10+)
4-5 p.m.: Jan. 17, Feb. 14, March 14 Learn the game or play a match with old and new friends.

Tarot Tuesday (Ages 12+)
Jan. 31, 6 p.m.

Learn the major and minor arcana, pull a spread and interpret the meaning.

Gemstone Jewelry Night

(Grades 7-12) **Feb. 28, 4 p.m.** Create wire-wrapped pendants and semi-precious bracelets.

Mindfulness Meditation with Belgin Brown (Ages 12+) March 28, 6 p.m. Unwind and observe with Belgin Brown from Healthy Healing Hands, LLC.

Wednesdays:

Teen Manga Club (Grades 6-12)
4-5 p.m.: Jan. 4, Feb. 1, March 1 Get ready to geek about your favorite manga and anime. Trivia, games, snacks, & prizes included!

Digital Art with Danielle (Grades 7-12) **4-5 p.m.: Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 15** Bring your creations to the digital realm. Sign-up is required.

Thursdays:

Unplugged Game Night (Grades 7-12) **Thursdays at 5 p.m.** From Magic to Unstable Unicorns, unplug and play.

Dungeons & Dragons One-Shot (Grades 7-12) **Feb. 16 at 6 p.m.** Try out the game with a one-shot campaign!

Take-and-Make Kits:

January 3-13: Year of the Rabbit craft
February 6-17: DIY Valentine's Snow Globe

March 6-17: DIY Ribbon Bookmark

ADULTS:

Special programs:

- **Estate planning:** Learn from Attorney Brendan Daly, CELA, why a will is important, what a power of attorney (POA) does, who might you name as your agent, what is a trust, and should you consider having one. Tuesday, 2/28 at 6:30 p.m.
- **Katherine Hepburn: From Hartford to Hollywood.** Born and

See LIBRARY, p. 18

FALL HIGHLIGHTS

We had a wonderful fall and start to the school year! The Trails are flooded with people enjoying the beautiful scenery and weather. Many are enjoying our programs such as the REK After School Program, which serves students in all five elementary schools, dance classes for those age 3 and older, preschool fitness programs, babysitter training classes, basketball, adult volleyball and much more. It is great seeing the smiles on all the participants faces.

Fun Fall events brought the community together to enjoy. The Annual Cross Country Challenge was a success and had representation from all five elementary schools. On Dec. 2, the Town of Vernon started the holiday season with the Annual Winterfest, featuring the firetruck torchlight parade, the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus and lighting of the holiday tree. The fun continued at the Annual Arctic Splash on Dec. 3, bringing many together to jump into the freezing cold water of Valley Falls Pond to raise money for Send-A-Kid to camp.

SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMS

Recreation and Education for Kids (REK) is for students K-5 at each of the elementary schools in Vernon from the end of the school day to 6 p.m. We strive to provide a variety of fun, engaging indoor and outdoor activities to help kids learn, make friends, and have fun after school. Daily activities include: homework time, snack, sports and group games, arts and crafts, table activities and special activities. Full details and information are available online.

Vacation Camp is available to children in grades K-5 and held during the December and April breaks. Let your child have fun with Parks and Recreation during school vacation weeks. Vacation Camps provide a fun place to spend time

off from school. Theme days, outdoor time, crafts, games, fields trips and more! Camp is held 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Vernon Teen Center. Register for individual days or the whole week. Check online to see upcoming offerings.

Beyond Dance Program - From September to December more than 175 dancers gathered at Center 375 weekly to learn new dance moves and enhance their skills through a partnership with Beyond Dance. On Dec. 3, a winter showcase was held at Vernon Center Middle School to show all they learned as well as spread holiday cheer. The dancers took over the big stage in the auditorium and put on quite a holiday performance for spectators to enjoy. In January the next cycle starts to gear up for the Spring Showcase. Classes run in monthly sessions. Students of all ages and skill levels are welcome.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS...

WINTER

Preschool Fitness Participants will play fun games with hula hoops, parachutes, sing songs, skip, jump and much more. This class will help your child develop motor, listening and social skills. Program meets on Fridays 9:30-10:15 a.m. at Center 375 Gym.

ART-ventures for kids in grades K-5. Come explore original art forms and techniques while sculpting colorful monsters, designing ceramic robots, decorating birdhouses and more. Of course, there will be stories which relate to the works of art. Program is held on Tuesdays from 5-6 p.m. at upper level room of Center 375 beginning Jan. 24.

Mad Science for kids in grades K-5. Students will explore inertia, gravity and centripetal force, tension and compression along with experiments. Program is held on Thursdays 5-6 p.m. at the upper level room of Center

375 beginning Jan. 26.

Pee Wee Indoor Track is for boys and girls ages 3-6 to learn the fundamentals of track running. Here is the opportunity to meet new friends, release that bundle of energy and have fun learning the sport behind running. Participants will play fun drills and activities to develop an appreciation and love for running track. Program will meet on Wednesdays at Center 375 Gym starting Jan. 18.

Babysitter Training Course for kids ages 11-15 on Saturday, March 25. Learn the best ways to keep children safe, including how to manage real-life situations, diapering, feeding and much more. Winter class date to be announced soon.

Over the Hill Basketball (Ages 35+) is an open gym basketball program held on Friday nights at Vernon Center Middle School for Vernon residents. Pre-registration for each session is recommended. Session 2 begins on Feb. 3.

Women's Volleyball League has an emphasis on staying active and having fun! This league is a great way to socialize, meet new people and enjoy the sport of volleyball. Program meets on Tuesday evenings at Center 375 Gym. Next session begins Feb. 1.

Snowperson/Sculpture Contest is coming. This contest is held on the Vernon Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page. Look for our Facebook posting in January and upload your picture by Feb. 27. Winners will be announced in March.

SPRING

Track Club is for boys and girls ages 6-14. Participants will have the ability to learn and experience a variety of track and field events. The program meets one night per week for six weeks starting mid-April. Practices are held at the Rockville

See PARKS & REC, p. 14

TOWN EMPLOYEES HONOR

Receptionist Trudy Roberts on her 90th Birthday

Town employees and others gathered Nov. 16 at Town Hall to wish Trudy Roberts, the long-time Town Hall receptionist, a happy 90th birthday.

Trudy has worked for the Town of Vernon for 35 years and is often the first person visitors to Town Hall meet when they arrive to visit the Town Clerk, Social Services, the Probate Court or another Town Hall office.

The birthday gathering was a surprise and Trudy was speechless ... for about 20 or 30 seconds.

There was a birthday cake, light refreshments and everyone singing happy birthday to Trudy. Please join us in wishing Trudy a happy 90th and many more!



CHALLENGE, continued from p. 5

on November 11th, 1918. The holiday, initially called Armistice Day, was created in 1919.

Schools were in session on Armistice Day because school and community leaders understood that the best way to convey the somber meaning of the day was to have children in school. The holiday was renamed Veterans Day in 1954, and eventually schools closed on the holiday.

In 1995, the Connecticut General Assembly changed the law to allow Connecticut schools to be in session on Veterans Day if there were programs about veterans. Vernon has opted to be open on Veterans Day for several years.

Fourth Grader Hunter Neff wore his grandfather's Air Force uniform shirt to school to mark Veterans Day.

Tech. Sgt. Lesniak and Navy veteran Tammy Salminen spoke to the students about their service in the armed forces.

Submitted By: David Owens, *Communications Specialist*

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JORGENSEN
CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Sun, Jan 22, 2 pm

TIX \$22-26

LLAMA LLAMA RED PAJAMA LIVE!



Bay Area Children's Theatre presents the hilarious new musical starring everybody's favorite Little Llama! Based on the bestselling books by Anna Dewdney, this contemporary musical expresses the imagination of childhood for both children and adults to enjoy.

Recommended for ages 3-6.

Media Sponsors: Seasons Media, 95.5 TIC FM, Lite 100.5 WRCH, MyConnecticutKids.com

Thu, Feb 2, 7:30 pm

TIX \$27-37

BALLETX



Named "among America's best" by *The New York Times*, Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet company, BalletX, unites distinguished choreographers with an outstanding company of world-class dancers to forge new works of athleticism, emotion, and grace, expanding the vocabulary of classical dance for all audiences.

"...it is rare to see such a youthful company be so precise and well-defined."
- *Broadway World*

Media Sponsors: Seasons Media, Lite 100.5 WRCH, New England Public Media

Mon, Feb 13, 7:30 pm

TIX \$37-47

LVIV NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF UKRAINE



Theodore Kuchar conductor
Solomiya Ivakhiv, violin

PROGRAM:

Yevhen Stankovych – Chamber Symphony No. 3 for Flute and String Orchestra

Dvořák – Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53

Beethoven – Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Sponsored by NICABM (National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine)

Media Sponsors: Connecticut Magazine, CT Public, Lite 100.5 WRCH

Note: all artists, events, dates, programs and COVID-19 policies are subject to change.
For ADA accommodation, please call the Box Office.

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UConn
SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

The largest historical museum in Vernon is located out of sight inside the Tolland Judicial District courthouse at 20 Park Street in Rockville. Throughout the building, the former Sykes School, hang photos of early Rockville, Vernon and Tolland.

This came to be because of the passion of one man, Tolland Judicial District Chief Clerk Roy Smith, Jr. Over several decades he worked with area historians and learned about local history and gathered items to display.

When the courthouse opened in 1995 the walls were bare and Smith saw an opportunity to share the history of Rockville and Tolland County with those visiting and working in the courthouse. Over the next 27 years he collaborated with local historians and others passionate about our history to build a collection.

Smith first met and worked with Dr. Ardis Abbott, who was Vernon's town historian. She filled him in on the history



of Vernon. And since the Vernon Historical Society did not have room to display all of its items, she was happy to share them for display at the courthouse. She provided Smith with photos and maps of Rockville that can be found on the walls of the courthouse.

After Dr. Abbott retired there was a pause, but in 2019 Smith decided to complete the project and met with Jean Luddy, Abbott's successor. She provided additional material and also prepared descriptions of the many items. Courthouse staff worked with Smith to ensure each item was properly presented.

After a visit to the nearby New England Civil War Museum, Smith worked with Curator Dan Hayden to create a Civil War display. Smith created displays to honor two other locals legends, Rock 'n' Roll great Gene Pitney and accomplished African-American artist Charles Ethan Porter, both of whom grew up in Rockville. One of the unique items in Jury Assembly Room is a replica of the Maxwell mansion, now the Rockville General Hospital.

Last spring, Smith was preparing for an event to highlight the Jury Assembly Room and celebrate the local historians and friends who helped him create the treasure when he unexpectedly died. In June, the Jury Assembly Room was dedicated to his memory. His family were guests at the dedication as were those from the community who helped create the displays, including Luddy and Hayden. The Historical Society and New England Civil War Museum are members of the Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative.

Now being summoned for Jury Duty is something to look forward to as you will be in for a special treat. For more on the ceremony see tinyurl.com/2oqs8nbe. To learn more about Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative events visit VernonVolunteers.org.

Submitted by: Jon Roe, *Facilitator*



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There are a number of local, state and federal programs available for Vernon residents in need.

Heating Assistance: This federally funded program helps low to moderate income residents with heating costs during the winter months.



This includes deliverable fuel – oil, propane, kerosene – as well as gas and electric heat. Residents with heat included in their rent are also able to apply. To set up an appointment, call Vernon Social Services at 860-870-3661.

Utility Shut Off: Eversource offers NuStart, a program to help low income individuals and families who

have a delinquent balance and are in jeopardy of having their service terminated. A monthly budget arrangement is made, and as long as the customer makes that payment every month, the past due amount is reduced over time. Call Social Services for information.

Shelter: Persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless should call 211 to reach a specialist trained to assess housing needs. Anyone seeking shelter in Connecticut must connect directly with 211. While Vernon is fortunate to have a shelter in town, Cornerstone, all requests must first start with 211. This is also a one-stop connection to other services and assistance.



Food: Hockanum Valley Community Council and Cornerstone both offer food pantries.

Additionally, Cornerstone has drop-in hot meals seven days a week. Call Social Services for more details.



Taxes: Basic income tax preparation assistance is provided to income-qualifying individuals or families from January through the April filing deadline. This is done by VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) at Town Hall. To set up an appointment, call Social Services at 860-870-3661.

Hygiene Products: Basic living items – soap, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, feminine pads, etc. – are available in limited supply to qualifying individuals or families. Call Vernon Social Services to inquire.

Submitted by: Matt Hellman, *Director*

VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Happy Holidays

The men and women of the Police Department would like wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season. We encourage everyone to celebrate responsibly and not drive under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Please use a designated driver or arrange for safe transportation through a paid service when necessary. As always, officers will be on the lookout for intoxicated drivers.

Vernon Town Ordinance 11-1 requires that sidewalks be cleared of snow and ice within eight hours after the snow has stopped or within eight hours after sunrise when it has snowed overnight. It is also a violation of this ordinance to place snow or ice onto the street or a sidewalk.

Town ordinance 13-38 prohibits overnight parking between the hours of 3:30 a.m. and 5 a.m. In addition, parking on the street is prohibited after a storm and during snow removal. Vehicles in violation may be ticketed and/or towed at the owner's expense. Parking bans will be posted on the police department's social media pages and sent to the local media for broadcasting. Voluntary compliance with these ordinances makes it safer for all of us.

Lastly, I am thankful for the support the police department receives from our community not only during the holidays, but the entire year. We look forward to working with the community in 2023.

Submitted by: John Kelley, *Police Chief*

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Dr. Shaleighne McKiernan**



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Winter time is holiday time, and that means lots of cooking, lots of entertaining, and unfortunately, lots of opportunities for home fires to occur. The Vernon Office of the Fire Marshal urges Vernon families to pay particular attention to fire safety during the winter and holiday season.

Home Heating and Fire Prevention Safety Tips

Smoke Alarms, when properly installed and maintained, provide early warning when fire occurs. For the greatest protection, install a

smoke alarm on every level of your home and inside each sleeping area.

Test smoke alarms at least once a month to ensure that they are working properly. Vacuum the dust from inside the alarm at least once a year. Batteries in battery-operated alarms should be changed twice a year or whenever an alarm "chirps" to signal low battery power. Never "borrow" a smoke alarm's battery for another item's use. A disabled smoke alarm cannot save your life. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years, or according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Develop an escape plan with two ways out from each room. Practice your fire escape plan with the family - include fire drills in the middle of the night - to ensure that everyone knows what to do if there is a fire and the smoke alarms sound.

Fireplaces and Heaters

- Before starting a fire in the fireplace, remove all decorations (including stockings hung by the fireplace) and be sure the flue is open.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. They can burn extremely fast, throwing off sparks and can ignite creosote that has previously accumulated in the chimney.
- Always use a screen in front of the fireplace. Also consider using a fire-resistant carpet or mat (made for fireplaces) on the floor in front of the fireplace.
- Keep all combustible materials, including wrapping paper at least three feet away from any heater - space heaters need space.
- When plugging in electric heaters, make sure that the outlet was designed to handle the load. Be safe. Do not plug anything else into the socket with the heater.

Cooking

- Cooking-related fires are the No. 1 cause of fires in the home.
- Do not leave cooking food unattended. If you must leave, turn off all cooking appliances.
- Keep combustible materials such as towels, potholders, papers, etc., away from heat sources on the stove or oven. Don't wear loose fitting clothing while cooking.
- Do not attempt to move a pan of grease that is on fire. Put a lid on the pan to smother the fire, then turn off the heat, or use an ABC-

Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season. As you stay cozy and warm this winter, be fire smart!

<p>Half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.</p>	<p>1 in every 7 home fires and 1 in every 5 home fire deaths involves heating equipment.</p>	<p>Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters.</p>
<p>Keep portable generators outside, away from windows, and as far away from your home as possible.</p>	<p>Install and test carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month.</p>	<p>Plug only 1 heat-producing appliance (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.</p>
<p>Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents every year.</p>	<p>Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container, and keep it outside at least 10 feet from your home and any nearby buildings.</p>	

If you notice a buzzing sound overhead the next time you see the fire department operating at an emergency incident, it just might be a drone.

The Town of Vernon Fire Department started an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) program in 2019. The tool is more commonly known as a drone. Five pilots certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and eight visual observers make up this specialized team.

The FAA-certified pilots oversee all flight operations, from pre-flight checks to the flight itself. The pilots are responsible for safely providing the incident command staff with useful information during fire, rescue, and hazardous material incidents. Visual observers help the pilots with setup, breakdown, and add extra sets of eyes during flight operations.

The department carries two separate



UAS kits, each comprised of a drone, a thermal imaging camera and batteries which allow up to 15 minutes of flight each. This equipment provides a significant decision-making advantage during long-term emergencies. The Town of Vernon Fire Department responds to a wide range of incidents and locations, including I-84, historic mills, commercial buildings, and residential homes.

In the last few years, the Town of Vernon's UAS team has responded to several search and rescue incidents,

both in town and in the region. Mutual aid partners can request the drone team, making it a regional asset. The team has recently deployed to Bolton, Coventry, Woodstock, Ellington, and Tolland.

Not only a firefighting resource, the fire department regularly collaborates with Vernon Police Department during search and rescue incidents.

The Vernon Police Department and Vernon's Office of Emergency Management assisted the fire department in establishing a UAS program after blazing a trail and starting one of the first UAS programs in the state in 2017.

The UAS team is just one of many opportunities for service with the Town of Vernon Fire Department. We are currently accepting applications for volunteers. For more information, please visit www.vernonfire.com.

Submitted by: Fire Chief Steven Eppler

TOWN OF VERNON

Department Listing

Administration.....	860-870-3670
Assessor.....	860-870-3625
Animal Control.....	860-870-3558
Board of Education.....	860-870-6000
Building.....	860-870-3633
Cemetery.....	860-875-3158
Collector of Revenue.....	860-870-3660
Engineering.....	860-870-3664
Finance.....	860-870-3690
Fire.....	860-871-7468
(In An Emergency, Call 911)	
Fire Marshal.....	860-870-3652
Information and Communication Technology.....	860-870-3646
Parks & Recreation.....	860-870-3520
Planning.....	860-870-3667
Police.....	860-872-9126
(In An Emergency, Call 911)	
Public Works.....	860-870-3500
Registrar of Voters.....	860-896-2376
Rockville Public Library.....	860-875-5892

Senior Center.....	860-870-3680
Social Services.....	860-870-3661
Town Clerk.....	860-870-3662
Water Pollution Control.....	860-870-3699
Youth Services.....	860-870-3555

Important Numbers to Remember

Ellington Probate Court.....	860-872-0519
Tolland County Chamber.....	860-872-0587
Historical Society Museum.....	860-870-3563
Hockanum Valley (Hvcc).....	860-872-9825
Vernon Housing Authority.....	860-871-0886
Kidsafe.....	860-872-1918
North Central District Health.....	860-745-0383
Section 8 Housing.....	860-872-4255
Rockville Hospital.....	860-872-0501
Manchester Hospital.....	860-646-1222
Connecticut Water Company.....	800-286-5700
Eversource.....	800-286-2828
Journal Inquirer.....	860-646-0500

A Reminder to Vernon Taxpayers

The second installment of personal property and real estate taxes, as well as Supplemental Motor Vehicle tax bills on the Grand List of Oct. 1, 2021, will become due and payable on Jan. 1, 2023. Tax bills for real estate and personal property are mailed in June of each year. The bill includes both the July and January installments.

Tax bills for supplemental motor vehicles are mailed in December for the January 1 due date.

The last day to pay these taxes without interest is Feb. 1, 2023. State law requires interest to accrue at 1.5 percent a month from the due date of Jan. 1, 2023, with a minimum charge of \$2 applied to all delinquent bills.

Payments may be made on the town website, www.vernon-ct.gov, and clicking the Tax and Sewer Payments button.

Payments by electronic check are FREE of charge. Payments are also accepted at the Tax Office, 8 Park Place, Vernon.

Office hours are Monday through Wednesday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Thursday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The office is closed Fridays. Tax payments can also be mailed to P.O. Box 387, Vernon, CT 06066.

Submitted by: Terry Hjarne, *Collector of Revenue*

CELEBRATIONS, continued from p. 8

climbing a greased pole, and baseball games on the Union Street grounds. Each evening offered band concerts with most nights having a Ball in Town Hall (Rockville Baseball Association's ball, Grand military ball, Fireman's ball), balloon ascensions, and fireworks. Miss Mabel McKinley, niece of President William McKinley, a renowned concert vocal soloist from New York, made an appearance each day of the festival.

Vernon's first 100 years culminated in a week-long celebration that brought together residents from all ends of town, and welcomed back those who had left. It was a simpler time, yet fostered the sense of community. I think we've done that well since our 100th year anniversary in 1908.

References and excerpts taken from *Cascades and Courage* by George S. Brookes, 1955

An in-depth account of the history of Rockville and Vernon can also be found in an article of *The Connecticut Magazine*, Summer of 1908, Volume XII, Number 2, entitled "The Centennial of Vernon 1808-1908", written by Harry Conklin Smith, a member of the centennial committee and editor of the Rockville Leader.

Submitted by: Karen Daigle, *Town Clerk*

PARKS & REC, continued from p. 8

High School Track. Practice times and day of the week are based on facility availability. Visit us online for more details.

Community Gardens: Harvest beautiful flowers, lovely plants, healthy fruit and fresh vegetables. Garden plots 25-feet by 25-feet are available to reserve and cost \$25 for Vernon residents and \$35 for non-residents. Plots are located at Vernon Center Middle School and are accessible via the West Street entrance. Registration for new gardeners opens on March 1.

Egg Hunt will be held on Thursday, April 6 for children ages 2-8 years old. Bring a container and hunt for plastic candy-filled eggs on the ball fields. Pre-registration is NOT required. Event is free. Full details and times available online.

Fishing Derby will be held in April at Valley Falls Pond for children ages 3-15 years old. Pre-registration will

be required. Full details coming soon.

Mother's Day Dash 5K in Henry Park will be held on Sunday, May 14. This is a USATF Certified 5K course and averages over 250 participants. The start and finish line are in Henry Park. The Mother's Day Dash offers 16 different divisions and a special Mother/Daughter and Mother/Son division. Proceeds from the race benefit the Vernon Police Explorers and Send-A-Kid Scholarship Fund. Pre-registration is available online. There is limited space for day of registration. Check-in begins at 8 a.m. Awards provided for each division. Free T-shirts for anyone pre-registered by April 16. Every pre-registered runner will receive one ticket for the raffle, additional tickets available for purchase on site. This event is made possible by support for our generous sponsors as well as the Vernon Police, Fire and Ambulance services.

National Trails Day is celebrated the first Saturday of June. Mark

your calendars for National Trails Day weekend and visit us online to find out what we have planned to celebrate.

Info Coming Soon...keep an eye on our website for more exciting programs like **Dodgeball, Sports Nutz, Egg Hunt, Teen Center** and more.

RENTALS

Looking for gym space or a room to host a meeting or party, then consider Center 375 (375 Hartford Turnpike). The Community Room holds up to 75 people, which includes some tables and chairs, pool tables, air hockey and foosball. Center 375 also has a gymnasium with a full basketball court available. Both the room and gym are available to rent on evenings and weekends. Visit our website for pricing and the rental form.

Submitted by: Amy Watt, *Assistant Director*

The new year is the ideal time to explore new opportunities offered at the Vernon Senior Center. Members enjoy a variety of programs and services including: special events, cards and games, educational lectures and classes, creative arts programs, health and wellness programs, transportation to shopping and medical appointments, books clubs, support groups, and more. These activities are designed for adults who want to stay active and add enjoyment to their daily living.

If getting fit is one of your New Year's resolutions, we have many fitness programs that will help you reach your goal. A chair yoga class is offered on Monday afternoons. It's the perfect class to improve flexibility and reduce stress. The Thursday morning tai chi class is a great way to improve balance and agility. Strength classes are offered on Thursday afternoons, and balance classes are on Friday afternoons. The Fitness Center is open to members. Fitness trainers will design a personalized training program to assist you in staying fit and healthy. New this year is the cardio drumming class offered on Tuesdays. This low-impact class offers cardio benefits using exercise balls, drumsticks, and drumming movements. This class is free with a monthly registration.

Tax time will soon be here! The AARP free tax preparation program is available to Vernon Senior Center members and non-members. Tax appointments will be on Fridays, starting Feb. 3. The tax appointment phone line will be accepting reservations on Mondays and Wednesdays, between 9 a.m. – noon. Vernon Senior Center members may register, starting on Jan. 9, and non-members may register starting on Jan. 23. The reservation phone number is 860-896-3835.

We have many special events planned this year that you don't want to miss. The semi-annual Breakfast and Bingo will take place on Jan. 18. Come and enjoy a delicious hot breakfast followed by Bingo. All winners will receive a specially-designed gift to enjoy on those cold January days. Join us for an afternoon of fun and surprises at the Comedy Magic Show and



pizza on Feb. 8. Our evening Mardi Gras Celebration, with Jose Paulo, will take place on Feb. 23.

Have you heard that "laughter is the best medicine?" It's true! Trevor Smith will provide information on how laughter boosts our mood and releases stress at his presentation "Laugh for the Fun of it: Creating Healthy Lifestyles through Laughter," on Jan. 25. This is a great way to wash away the winter blues with laughter!

Stop by the Center and pick up our monthly newsletter "Out and About," or visit our website, to learn about the many day-trips and overnight trips we will be offering this year.

For more information, please call 860-870-3680, visit our website: <https://www.vernon-ct.gov/departments-services/senior-center>, or our Facebook page: Vernon Senior Center at Bolton Road.

Membership to the Vernon Senior Center is easy. New members are required to complete a membership information sheet and submit it with a lifetime membership fee of \$10 for Vernon residents or \$15 for non-Vernon residents.

Submitted by: Cynthia Maheu, *Administrative Assistant*

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SAFETY, continued from p. 12

rated fire extinguisher. Alert your family so they can evacuate safely.

- Be sure to turn pot handles towards the back of the stove. Small children are generally curious and may reach for a handle to see what is in the pot. They could get burned.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

Submitted by: Daniel Wasilewski, *Fire Marshal*

Vernon Board of Education Receives 'Leadership Award of Distinction' for Teamwork, Leadership and Commitment to Student Achievement

The Vernon Board of Education has been recognized for its consistent teamwork and leadership with a Leadership Award of Distinction by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. Vernon is one of only 15 districts in Connecticut to achieve this distinction.

Vernon's school board has been recognized multiple times by CABE and has received the organization's leadership award for seven straight years.

The Leadership Award of Distinction recognizes the board's laser-like focus on improving student achievement, its commitment to conduct business in an open and transparent manner, and to adhere to board policies that reflect a commitment to fulfilling its mission.

"The Vernon Board of Education consistently goes above and beyond in its pursuit of excellence," CABE Executive Director Patrice McCarthy said. "The board creates an environment where administrators and teachers help students achieve every day. It is also committed to



Vernon Board of Education members Deborah Rodriguez, left, and Kristiana Wintress, second from left, are joined by Vernon Superintendent of Schools Joseph P. Macary, right, and Connecticut Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker, second from right, after receiving the CABE Leadership Award of Distinction.

carrying out its business in a cooperative manner that is consistently focused on providing the best education possible for Vernon students and providing Vernon taxpayers with the best value."

Serving on a board of education is one of the most important jobs a person can embark on, Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary said.

"We have a board that works hard to understand the issues and challenges we face, but that also sets high expectations for student achievement," Dr. Macary said. "The board knows that the sky is the limit for Vernon children."

Board Chair Anne Fischer said teamwork is essential for the Board of Education. Board members take on a

variety of responsibilities beyond attendance at meetings. They interact with school staff, serve as liaisons to schools and departments and work on multiple subcommittees.

"When you run for the Board of Education you are making a significant commitment of time and energy," Fischer

See AWARD, p. 17

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During these cold winter days, the idea of fresh produce and picking vegetables right from the garden may seem like a distant summer memory. These same thoughts were likely on the minds of those who designed the root cellar at Valley Falls Farm more than 100 years ago.



Built between 1910 and 1930, root cellars were often used before modern-day refrigerators were in every household. The root cellar at Valley Falls Farm is mostly underground with three separate thick-walled rooms. After the Beach family purchased the 250-acre property as a summer home in 1915, they used the root cellar to provide farm-fresh food for the family when living at their Hartford home during the holiday and winter months.

When the Beach family lived at the property, Andy Darico Sr. was caretaker of the farm and his wife, Lucia, tended the large vegetable garden. As a result of her efforts, the root cellar would be filled with tasty carrots, beets, turnips and potatoes. It also stored fruits from the orchard, canned and pickled vegetables, and homemade cider and wine.

Root cellars were typically found on a gentleman's farm, in keeping with country estate design goals. Typically built into earth berms, they faced north, retained a temperature of 32-40 degrees, and a high humidity level of 85%-95% to prevent vegetables from drying out. The root cellar at Valley Falls Farm meets all of these criteria.

Additionally, the wooden shelves, bins and platforms found in the structure were used because they are

naturally anti-bacterial and do not conduct heat and cold. The barrels, baskets and storage bins in the cellar are also original to the farm.

When you enter the root cellar, the rooms are dark since this prevents the vegetables from sprouting. The structure was also designed with ventilation to circulate air around the vegetables to reduce mold and to help keep the cellar cool.

In addition to the root cellar, the stable and several other historic buildings at Valley Falls Farm will be open to the public when the Heritage Center is completed this spring. Each building is filled with items found on the farm and offers a fascinating look at the past. Please check the Friends of Valley Falls website (www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org) or Facebook page for the opening date, as well as other events happening at the Farm and Park.

Submitted by: Nancy Steffens, *Board Member*

AWARD, continued from p. 16

said. "A collaborative approach to our mission leads to better outcomes for our students, our staff and administrators and our community. We are grateful to CABE for recognizing our board's dedication and efforts to educate the students of Vernon with the belief that all children can learn using a whole-child approach."

The Vernon Board of Education was recognized on Nov. 18 at the annual CABE/CAPSS Convention. CAPSS is the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.

Submitted By: David Owens, *Communications Specialist*

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Vernon ROCKS Coalition hosts and partners with Vernon Youth Services, Vernon Police Department and the Vernon Public Schools to offer Youth-Community Basketball Tournament

On Nov. 17th both Rockville High School gyms were filled with bouncing basketballs, students, teachers, and the Vernon Police Department's school resource officer as they warmed up for the 3 v 3 Vernon Community Basketball Tournament taking place that afternoon.

The tournament included 63 participants, eight student volunteers, and three volunteer referees. The goal was to provide a fun, substance free afternoon for the participants who were able to engage in some friendly competition outside of the classroom.

The tournament revealed lots of athletic talent, resulting in some very close games. School Resource Officer Allison Lawrence was among the players and sunk a three-pointer, despite some excellent defense.



T-shirts, snacks, water, and pizza were made available to all players and volunteers. The Vernon ROCKS Coalition is grateful for all students, teachers, volunteers, and partnering town departments, including the Vernon Public Schools and Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell, who made this event a success. Vernon ROCKS looks forward to hosting again next fall.

The Vernon ROCKS Coalition is a collaboration of community stakeholders, parents, youth, and volunteers, whose focus is to prevent the use of drugs and alcohol in Vernon's youth by promoting protective factors and decreasing risk factors that contribute to substance use.

Submitted by: Michelle Hill,
Director

LIBRARY, continued from p. 7

raised in Connecticut, Hepburn had a career in stage, film and television that reflected the changing role of women in broader society. The story of her life-long ties to Connecticut offers a complete picture of how Hepburn became the woman and the star she was. Presented by Connecticut Historical Society, Tuesday, 3/21 at 6 p.m.

...and more events to come! Make sure to check the library's Events Calendar for updates.

Recurring group meetings and programs:

- **Hooks & Needles** - first

Wednesday of the month at 2 p.m. (1/4, 2/1, 3/1)

- **Book discussion** - third Tuesday of the month at 2 p.m. (1/17, 2/21, 3/31)
- **Movie screenings** - Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. (1/5, 1/19, 2/2, 2/16). Snacks provided!
- **Spice It Up!** With Rosemary grab 'n' go - starts 2/6
- **Friends of the Library** meetings - first Thursday of the month at noon (1/5, 2/2, 3/2)

Craft programs:

- **Frosted Vista paint night** - Tuesday, 1/17 at 5:30 p.m.

- **Felt Heart Pins** - Thursday, 2/9, at 5 p.m.

- **Vincent's Night paint night** - Tuesday, 3/7 at 5:30 p.m.

For all gardeners out there - our **Seed Lending Library** will be opening the week of March 6!

Go to our website (rockvillepubliclibrary.org) or contact us (860-875-5892 or rockvillelibrary@vernon-ct.gov) for events information and registration requirements.

Submitted by: Anna Kuziara,
Administrative Assistant

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