LHS Seniors Prepare for Change

Natalie Cantlin, Class of 2014

Will Weatherly

There is some contention over when it starts – some say the beginning of the senior year, some say in the second semester of junior year – but when “senior-itis” hits, it hits hard. What is “senior-itis?” It can be a hazy, glazed-over look in an upperclassman’s eye, a telltale sign that his or her mind is not there in the classroom, but in what lies ahead for them after graduation. It can be seen in the lounging groups of seniors in the library, luxuriously enjoying the final moments of high school. It can include a sense of fear, too; “senior-itis” is just as much an admission of anxiety over the future as it is an eagerness for the future to come.

As the end of the school year draws closer, we asked seniors at Lebanon High School about their plans after graduation. We also asked them to describe the overwhelming emotion that comes with this change. You can see an interesting perspective on Lebanon in these questioning young adults. Home, for them, is now as much a place to move on from as it was a source of comfort for 18 years.

Ed. Note: Congratulations, Class of 2014! I hope you find your passion and ways to pursue it.

Natalie Cantlin – Lebanon

“After I graduate, my plan is to take a gap year and do some traveling. I want to see some more of the world before I’m stuck in a

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Protect, Serve – and Make a Difference

Dave Nelson

If you truly love your job, you never have to work a day in your life. A rather profound statement, and Lebanon Police Officer Bartlett (Bart) Kapuscinski not only subscribes to that axiom but lives it every single day.

One short visit with Officer Kapuscinski quickly establishes that he is far from your average law enforcement officer. The mention of his qualifications brought a wide smile to the face of his supervisor, Lieutenant Matthew Isham.

“Bart is simply a very good police officer,” Isham said. “He has family here in this community and cares very much about

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Beverly Damren: At the Heart of West Lebanon

Ruth Sylester

Beverly Damren has been an energetic and sociable presence in West Lebanon for 65 years. She has made her mark as a parent, a Den Mother, and counselor. She has worked in the schools, in social service groups, and most recently putting a strong shoulder to the wheel to get the Kilton Public Library up and running. Growing up in Claremont during the Depression, she learned not to wait around for someone else to do things for her.

Different Times, Different Pace

“Everybody walked – you didn’t think anything of it,” Bev recalls of her childhood. Her maternal grandparents had a farm, which her uncle later took over. The farm supplied some luxuries, such as butter, during the hard times of the Depression and World War II rationing, though the taste was “strong,” Bev remembers. And life in an old farmhouse wasn’t easy in winter. “They lived in the kitchen, which was huge, with a big woodstove.”

Continued on page 9

Beverly Damren with her son Jeff
The Lebanon Times is delivered to your mailbox each quarter, no subscription or payment necessary. It's our privilege to bring you all the good news we can. Our mailing sponsor, Mascoma Savings Bank, makes this possible. We're pleased to have their continued support behind our community newspaper.

Fountains for Lebanon

Lebanon was once known as “The City of Fountains” – and the Lebanon Fountain Committee is on a mission to help it live up to that name. Established in 1997 to spearhead the restoration of the Marion Carter fountain downtown, the five-member committee continues to raise funds, recruit volunteers, and strive toward the restoration and building of the fountains the city was once known for.

According to Lebanon resident and committee volunteer Priscilla Gosselin, the priority this year is to build a fountain on the downtown Mall, providing another enjoyable space where residents and visitors can gather. As the city recognizes the 50th anniversary of the Lebanon fire that destroyed much of downtown, Gosselin said it seems like a good time to create a new downtown attraction that will add to the feeling of community and fellowship.

The project has already received initial funding of $50,000 from the Timken Foundation, while Mascoma Savings Bank and the Lebanon Rotary Club are also supporters. Both also helped fund the committee’s three fountain projects completed since its establishment in 1997. The first was the refurbishment of the Marion Carter fountain and its dedication for its 100th anniversary on August 7, 1998. The second was the refurbishment of the Colburn Park fountain, with a pedestal and bowl donated by the Babineau family on Green Street. The third effort was the creation of the High Street water feature and park, commemorating the Lebanon Rotary Club’s 100th anniversary and recognizing the men and women who lived and worked on High Street in the early days of the mills on the Mascoma River.

“These fountains are a gift to the community through their continued support,” Gosselin said of the Lebanon Fountain Committee’s donors.

Of course the committee is diligently seeking further support to make the downtown Mall fountain a lasting feature of the community. Residents can support the efforts by volunteering for the committee or specific efforts, Gosselin said, giving “truly a gift of ideas” to move projects along. Donations of any amount are always appreciated, as well, and may be sent to the Lebanon Rotary Club, the fiscal sponsor for the project. Learn more about the Lebanon Fountain Committee at lebnh.net.
Opera North for All

Opera North is the only year-round professional opera company in the Tri-State area, and it is based here in Lebanon. Opera North has performed classical music theater for the community for 32 years and uses the Lebanon Opera House as its summer venue. Rather than traveling to large metropolitan areas, Upper Valley residents can experience classical music favorites such as Carmen, South Pacific, and The King and I right in their own back yards.

Opera North's mission is to engage artists, audiences, and the community in the experience of classical music theater in an intimate setting. One way the company fulfills its mission is by working with many local children in its productions. For The King and I, the company held open auditions for residents of Lebanon and the surrounding area and cast 20 local children in the show. Opera North also worked with City Center Ballet to cast dancers for the production.

Children who were cast were offered a free week-long summer camp with Opera North staff to teach them singing, acting, and dance skills. Opera North offers the camps to children free of cost because of its belief that talented local residents should be engaged in the arts regardless of socio-economic status. This year, eight local children cast for its Street Scene production will attend a free week of camp in June to prepare them for the professional rehearsals.

During the rest of the year, the company brings free education and outreach events to schools. In April, Opera North performed Little Red Riding Hood at Mount Lebanon School and 14 other local elementary schools and public venues. The comical 30-minute children's opera featured singers in full costume with piano accompaniment. One second-grader wrote after the performance, “I loved Little Red Riding Hood. You guys were amazing! The hole (sic) entire show was so good it was hard for me to tell what part was my favorite.”

This fall, the company will perform scenes from this summer’s production of Street Scene at area schools including Lebanon High School. These free school performances allow almost 6,000 local students each year to experience music theater in their own schools during a time when arts programs are being heavily cut.

In the last five years, nearly 20 percent of U.S. opera companies have closed their doors. But Opera North has continued to increase both revenue and ticket sales. It has expanded its number of summer productions to three and developed new performances and events to share with the community during the rest of the year. Its low-cost showcase performances in local churches have delighted audiences at the Lebanon United Methodist Church and the West Lebanon Congregational Church.

The company’s lecture series is another way Opera North brings opera to the Lebanon community. Last year, Dartmouth music professor Steve Swayne gave a lecture on the “Mad Women of Opera” at the A VA Gallery. Carolin Barker-Bassett, a long-time Lebanon resident who attended a lecture on the opera Little Women, said, “I’m 81 years old and of course I know the story [of Little Women]. I can remember my mother reading it to me and my sister. It was nice to hear how it was transferred into music.”

Opera North believes that bringing high quality classical music theater to the city of Lebanon makes it a more vibrant, attractive city for residents and tourists alike. For ticket information or to volunteer, please visit operanorth.org.

Good Things Happening

Summer is almost here – and with it come lots of new ways to get out and enjoy the community along with the warm weather. I'll remind you of a few here, so you don’t miss out on the fun you could be having right in your own back yard this season:

• The Lebanon Farmers’ Market is open each Thursday, May 22 to September 25, from 4 to 7 p.m. in Colburn Park. Buy local produce, prepared foods, and crafts while enjoying the sounds of local musicians.

• Speaking of Colburn Park, there’s lots of music there! Free concerts are held every Monday and Thursday evening from June 30 to August 21. Families will enjoy Thursdays in the Park at noon, with children’s musicians and performers. There’s even lunchtime dancing on Tuesdays!

• The Lebanon Memorial Pool is open June 16 to August 23. The whole family will enjoy the Splash Bash Pool Party on July 19 for just $1 per person.

• There’s lots of great hiking and walking within minutes of almost wherever you are – from Storrs Hill to Signal Hill to Trues Ledges to the Northern Rail Trail and more.

And that’s just a small sampling of the opportunities you’ll find around Lebanon right now. Read on for more, and of course you can get details about these and other happenings online. Enjoy the summer!

– Allison E. Rogers Furbish
What music makes you think of our area?
Rusted Root – it’s a very organic-sounding band, and “Send Me On My Way” reminds me of my kids because it’s from Ice Age.

What plants do you like to grow around your yard?
My late summer hibiscus is my favorite plant. Though I would love some blue hydrangeas from my home in Massachusetts.

What is the most peaceful place around town?
The green, right around sundown. I go and walk my dog around then, and the time of night is really peaceful – the hustle of the day is behind me. The light in the sky is beautiful, too.

What’s your favorite artistic venue in our area?
There are so many gems – but A VA is in my neighborhood.

Have you seen any good performances lately? If so, what?
My daughter’s in them all the time with the school productions and North Country Community Theater – I just saw NCCT’s Seussical and it was fabulous!

If you could give anything to the city, what would you donate?
A cover for the pool so it would be easier to clean. I could use a tune up.

What’s your favorite local event or holiday?
Christmas. Like Clark Griswold.

What music makes you think of our area?
Live music is what I think of. Not the “I live in a big city and hear new music every night” kind of live, but free concerts on the green and at places like Salt hill (no cover charge) – you can’t find that in a big city.

What plants do you like to grow around your yard?
If you looked at it, invasive Japanese Knotweed is what you’d think. We prefer tomatoes and lettuce from our garden bed.

What are you enjoying most about spring?
One of the best things about spring is the peace and serenity that comes with the change of seasons.

What music makes you think of our area?
Music is what I think of. Not the “I live in a big city and hear new music every night” kind of live, but free concerts on the green and at places like Salt hill (no cover charge) – you can’t find that in a big city.

What do you think you’ve gained by living here?
Living in New Hampshire has taught me to appreciate the beauty of nature and the importance of community.

What’s one new thing in the Upper Valley that you’ve enjoyed?
The extension of the Mascoma River Greenway – Rail Trail extension.

What’s your favorite local event or holiday?
The Shamrock Shuffle 5K – launches Spring running season (except for this year).

How would you describe your clothing style?
Running season (except for this year).

What music makes you think of our area?
I like the laid-back vibe of our area, and I think that’s reflected in the music that resonates with me.

Have you seen any good performances lately? If so, what?
NCCT’s production of Seussical was amazing.

If you could give anything to the city, what would you donate?
Funds to build the Mascoma River Greenway – Rail Trail extension.

What’s your favorite route to go on a drive in our area?
The Blue Route by bus, or the Rail Trail to Landmark Trails when I’m running or biking.

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The extension of the Mascoma River Greenway.

What do you think you’ve gained by living here?
Community

Is there anything you miss about the Upper Valley?
Friends who have moved away. There have been many.
Welcome Home Maura!
Norwich, Vermont native Dr. Maura H. Sanders, D.M.D. will be joining our team soon!

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Our daily transportation decisions have major impacts on our personal health and the wellness of our communities. Places that design streets to encourage walking and biking inevitably get people active and out of their cars. A robust transit system encourages good public health because it gets people walking to bus stops. Buses also help us breathe easier. They produce 95 percent less carbon monoxide, 92 percent fewer volatile organic compounds, and 45 percent less carbon dioxide than private automobiles, according to the American Public Health Association.

Thankfully, Lebanon residents have many options to use public transportation or take a safe walking or biking trip. Advance Transit provides frequent connections to places to shop, work, and play throughout Lebanon and the Upper Valley “core” towns. Need to get to Dartmouth Hitchcock for work or an appointment? Advance Transit’s Blue Route provides a quick, fifteen-minute ride from Downtown Lebanon an astonishing thirty times per day. Perhaps you want to get into downtown Hanover to walk around and do some shopping. Hop on an Orange Route bus in front of the Kilton Library, and you’ll be there in ten minutes.

Thetford resident Stacey Glazer says Advance Transit is particularly helpful on days when she carpools. “Last year, I carpooled into the office twice a week and took the Orange to Hanover where I met my daughter for yoga class at the Dartmouth gym. After class we would drive home together. Advance Transit helped us have one fewer car in the household.”

If you’re commuting into Lebanon from further away, you might be able to use a longer-distance bus to get to work. Connecticut River Transit provides rides from communities along I-91 south to major employers, including Dartmouth Hitchcock, Dartmouth College, Hypertherm, Fuji-Dimatix, and the VA Medical Center. Stagecoach provides similar services from I-91 North and I-89 North in Vermont. If you feel tired and stressed from a long commute, chances are a bus ride could help you feel more relaxed and ready for your workday.

Lebanon’s resources for biking and walking are getting better each year. Area residents have for years enjoyed the Northern Rail Trail, an off-road biking and walking path that runs from Lebanon through Enfield to southern New Hampshire. Now, the City is working to extend this trail into West Lebanon through the Mascoma River Greenway project. This exciting, four-mile project will run all the way to the Vermont border and provide approximately half of Lebanon residents a connection within a mile of their homes.

Walking to work is a great option in many parts of town. Nate Miller lives and works near Lebanon’s Colburn Park, and he enjoys many benefits from walking to his job as Executive Director of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. “I’ve walked to work nearly every day for the past eight years. Not only is it good exercise, but it’s also good for the wallet. My fiancée and I save thousands of dollars each year because we don’t need to own a second vehicle.”

To the north of downtown, the Mount Support multi-use path provides a safe way to access Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon High School, Timberwood Commons, and other residential areas. Paved in 2012, the separated path gives cyclists and walkers an option to go north and south in the Route 120 area without having to travel on the four-lane state highway itself. Advance Transit has also adjusted its Blue Route to accommodate the new residential developments along Mount Support Road.

These many improvements have not gone unnoticed. Last year, the Upper Valley Transportation Management Association recognized the City of Lebanon as the winner of its “Municipal Project of the Year” award, saying Lebanon received the award for many projects that are helping to build a strong transportation network. Continue to look for great new ways to bike, walk, and take the bus around Lebanon – the city is on the path to a great transportation future!

Aaron Brown is transportation program manager at Vital Communities, where he works with employers, schools, and municipalities to build better mobility options. To get involved in this work, visit vitalcommunities.org/uvtma.
With Funding, Lebanon School Children Could Learn Modern Dance from NY Professionals

Lebanon school children may soon have a rare opportunity to dance with a professional New York-based modern dance company—RIOULT Dance NY. RIOULT performs and teaches modern dance based on techniques developed by its founder and choreographer Pascal Rioult. Through their DanceREACH program, RIOULT teaches and inspires school-age children to explore creativity and expression through the art of dance.

Linda Copp, the artistic director of City Center Ballet (CCB), is hoping to raise $7,000 to bring RIOULT into the Lebanon school system, the Upper Valley community, and CCB. If she is able to raise the funds, twelve RIOULT dancers will visit Lebanon for a week-long residency that, according to Linda, “will involve the whole community in an unforgettable dance experience.”

If funding goals are reached by the end of May, RIOULT will arrive in early September to teach third- and fourth-grade students RIOULT techniques and the principles of modern dance as they explore the choreography of Fables. Fables is based on the stories of Jean de La Fontaine, who drew on the work of Aesop and the Indian fables of Bidpai. RIOULT set La Fontaine’s adaptation into motion through dance in 2008.

According to Jere Hunt, who has worked with CCB in the past and currently dances with RIOULT, the teaching artists will guide the workshops but the children will shape the final choreography. “For example,” says Jere, “if they are working on The Tortoise and the Hare, they will be asked to think about the size and shape of the animal, and come up with steps to mimic the animal’s movements.” At the close of the week, the children will have an opportunity to audition to dance on stage alongside the RIOULT dancers in a public performance of Fables.

During their visit, RIOULT will work with CCB dancers introducing them to RIOULT Dance NY choreography. At the conclusion of their stay, the community with have an opportunity to enjoy three performances: a unique performance by RIOULT Dance NY, a performance of Fables by RIOULT dancers and Lebanon school children, and a piece performed by CCB.

In order to bring RIOULT to the area, funding support from the community is critical. “We need donations to help us fund this project because we can’t do it alone,” says CCB Artistic Director Linda Copp. If you would like to donate and offer Lebanon school children this rare opportunity, contact CCB at Dance@CityCenterBallet.org or (603) 448-9710.

Hazardous Waste Collection This Month

The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission and Lebanon Solid Waste Facility will host a Household Hazardous Waste and Unwanted Medicine Collection Day on Saturday, May 17, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Residents can bring old paints, cleaning chemicals, pesticides, dirty gasoline, adhesives, mercury-containing devices, and much more, including unwanted medicines. More information is available at dpw.lebnh.net.
Elder Profile: Beverly Damren – continued from page 1

Claremont was a regional center in those days. “People went there to shop,” says Bev. “What changed it was the Interstate coming through. And then of course the changes in manufacturing.”

Bev was home from college in 1946 when she met Jerry Damren, recently out of the service. He had served in Italy, fighting at Monte Cassino. Taken prisoner, he spent eight months in a German prison camp late in the war. “There was not much to eat,” says Bev, describing his captivity. “It was prison camp late in the war. “There was not much to eat,” says Bev, describing his captivity. “It was the worst winter in quite a while, and there was no heat. You’ve heard of grass soup… But the worst thing was there was nothing to do. Boredom was the biggest problem.”

When Jerry returned, he finished up an education degree at Duke, where he had a baseball scholarship. His real love was history, recalls Bev, but when he had served in Italy, fighting at Monte Cassino. Taken prisoner, he spent eight months in a German prison camp late in the war. “There was not much to eat,” says Bev, describing his captivity. “It was prison camp late in the war. “There was not much to eat,” says Bev, describing his captivity. “It was the worst winter in quite a while, and there was no heat. You’ve heard of grass soup… But the worst thing was there was nothing to do. Boredom was the biggest problem.”

Bev remembers, using “the little library down here,” but adds, “You were very limited in what you could do. Still, it was friendly: Miss Watson was the librarian there, for 50 years, and the kids used it; it was the only place to look things up.”

In the days before the Interstate, Jim Kilton graduated from Dartmouth and returned to his father’s drugstore, Red Cross Pharmacy on West Lebanon’s Main Street. (The building is now a chiropractic office.) He ran the pharmacy, which also had a popular soda fountain, for many years, known for his kindness, and for putting in long hours. He and his wife, Willena, had no children, and in 1999 they left generous bequests to local organizations, including Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital, their church, and $1.3 million to renew or replace the library.

The library trustees, including Bev, who had joined the board in 1997, examined the possibility of on-site expansion. “But there wasn’t much space, and it just didn’t seem wise to put that much money into a limited site. The place on Main Street – it was a filling station when I moved here – was an unattractive empty lot for the main street of a city. And they were asking a tremendous price, almost a million dollars. When Dan [Smith, then board chair] called, they had a potential buyer. He said, ‘If anything changes, let me know.’”

Over the next ten years, the trustees bought the land, raised additional funds, found an architect, and shepherded the project to completion. Bev, who was board chair when the library opened in 2010, says, “The best advice we were given was to get an architect who’d done libraries before; they knew things we wouldn’t have thought of. And Walter Paine [former editor/publisher of the Valley News] came on the board. I don’t think we’d be where we are if he hadn’t joined in – so involved and hard-working.” Considering, she adds, “It was a lot of work, but worthwhile, and I think everyone’s happy with the outcome.”

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Every Father's Day weekend for the past decade, friends, family, and running enthusiasts come together to remember Lebanon’s Skip Matthews, whom the community lost to brain cancer on September 7, 2003, at age 52.

“Running was a shared passion” said Joanne Oscadal, race founder and family friend. She and Skip’s widow, Lisa Matthews, continue to share fitness interests, attending the CCBA together for TRX class, an athletic workout program that focuses on movement for total body strength.

“I am from a family of runners, and we participated as a family in the Race for the Cure annual road race when my sister, Peggy, was battling breast cancer,” Oscadal said. “We were touched when the Western New York Race for the Cure road race was dedicated to her after she passed away. It was a day of remembrance for our family and friends; my thought in suggesting Skip’s Run was to pay forward that gesture.”

So, each year hundreds of people gather to commemorate Skip Matthews through one of his most treasured hobbies: running.

“The idea of having it on Father’s Day was intentional, because Skip was a great dad, and also because we all wanted it to be a very family-oriented event,” said Lisa Matthews. Last year’s race hosted more than 450 participants, with Skip’s son, Peter Matthews, firing the starting pistol.

Skip’s Run is a four-mile race that loosely follows the Northern Rail Trail and also includes a one-mile “Fun Run” for supporters. The course loops through the Packard Covered Bridge, ending at its starting point in Colburn Park, where the celebration features a free barbecue hosted by Lebanon’s Salt Hill Pub.

“I remember with great fondness,” said Oscadal, reminiscing about the pints of beer she shared with Skip at the local watering hole. “Skip was wheelchair bound at that point, but he...
kept us laughing most of the evening. He was a great wit, as I’m sure you will hear from his close friends.”

“While reflecting on Skip’s life in my daily activities, I often find myself asking, ‘what would Skippy have done in this situation?’ He never ceased to amaze folks with his creativity,” Race Director Denis Ibey said.

“Skip shared with many the hope that the fruit of the ongoing research would result in a cure for brain cancer,” writes Caamilo E. Fadul, MD, Neuro-Oncology Program director at the Norris Cotton Cancer Center, in the race program’s opening letter.

“The funding of brain tumor research is one of the ways in which the memory of his life continues to make a difference in other people’s lives.”

All proceeds of Skip’s Run benefit the Brain Tumor Research Fund at the Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. Since its inception, the race has raised more than $105,000, and each year the event continues to grow.

“It is just a wonderful community event, filled with fathers and children (young and grown) running to the finish line, families gathered on the green, the faces of runners as they reach the finish line – for some it is their first road race. It is just a very happy event. A day to connect and reconnect with friends,” said Oscadal.

The race is staffed each year by volunteers to help with registration, food and water, safety, traffic, fundraising with corporate donors, publicity, music and entertainment, t-shirts, refreshments, and clean up.

“As the years have gone by, some folks have left the committee and new folks have come on board, but there is a core group that has participated from the very beginning. Some of them were great friends of Skip’s and some came along afterward and never knew him. But everyone works hard on the planning,” said Lisa Matthews.

“Glioblastoma multiforme, the type of brain tumor that Skip had, is a devastating, highly aggressive and lethal brain cancer that often strikes people in the prime of life,” explained Matthews. “The support we received from the community during the years he was sick was phenomenal, and the joyful spirit that infects Skip’s Run is a continuation of the community spirit that I think Skip embodied and we all treasure.”

The 11th Annual Skip’s Run takes place this year on Sunday, June 15, starting at 10 a.m. To learn more, register, or donate, visit skipsrun.org.
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On Lunch and Local Haunts

Long ago, when I was young like those kids playing on the swing set on the other side of The Green, the sunny day options weren’t so numerous. I would go outside, play in the mud, and go to sleep tired. Find a stick suitable to be a baseball bat and hit stones into the woods behind the house. A few years later it was jump onto a bicycle or a friend’s car and beat feet to Trues Brook down on the corner of Plainfield and West Lebanon where the summer action was. Friends were always to be found there, sitting on the sun-splashed rocks,

with Doug while he gets my burger ready, or sit inside at Salt hill Pub, but that could be too tempting on a day meant for outside activity. Chinese food or maybe a calzone from Village Pizza? Much to consider for a man too lazy to get to his feet.

cab full of people. It circled The Green and disappeared up Bank Street and I wondered if their new neighbor they hadn’t met yet would clue them in on what makes Lebanon cool, where to go get groceries, and where they should shop for the kids. But what is cool to the neighbor and cool to me might be two different things, so our new residents might need to wander on down here to Colburn Park and get to know all of us – I think they would like us.

I wondered what Lebanon kids do on a day like this. They have the Lebanon Pool, we had Trues Brook. They have the CCBA and we had the old CCB. They have computers at the library, we had pay phones on the wall next to the exits at the high school. All I knew for sure was that there were no school-age kids around, and that was a good sign, since this was a school day. They have a school, and so did we. I did know one thing, I told myself – they’re not hanging around on sunny rocks down at Trues Brook, anymore – those parents were finally heard by the powers that were.

Well, whether or not I ever meet those people in the moving van was not my cross to bear, I decided. If the winds of fate ever blew us together, so be it, I’ll tell them why this one thinks Lebanon is cool. But now it was lunchtime and my next decision would be whether lunch would be pepperoni pizza, lo mein, bangers and mash, or a cheeseburger with French fries, with some Yankee bashing on the side.

Or, I could sit on this bench at Colburn Park with my hands clasped behind my head and my sneakers pointed toward City Hall.

What would you have done?
We Want Your Photos!
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Email your HIGH RES digital photo to editor@thelebanontimes.com. Please include your name, address, phone number, and pet’s name.

Sara, Korry and Fletcher Vargo with Tuckerman (an adopted rescue) at Colburn Park

Neighbors Susan Clark with Zoe and Flora Meyer with adopted rescue Paddy Brown

Lebanon

Trinity and Thunderbird

Lebanon

Courtney Rogers and Atticus

Lebanon

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Find the love of your life at the Upper Valley Humane Society. Young or old, feathered or furry, you’ll find your match at UVHS.
A T. Rex Named Sue

The most iconic dinosaur that ever lived will spend the season at the Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich, Vermont. The exhibit, “A T. rex Named Sue,” opening May 17, features a cast of the most complete Tyrannosaurus rex ever discovered. At 42-feet long, 3,500 pounds, and 12 feet tall at the hips, this fully articulated cast skeleton is the keystone piece of this traveling exhibition, which also includes replicated dinosaur fossils, video footage, free-standing interactive exhibits and colorful graphics.

Montshire visitors will be able to get hands-on with replicas of Sue’s arm bone, tail, rib, and teeth; engage in interactive activities; learn how the T. rex saw, ate, and sniffed out prey; and view footage showing the changing perceptions of T. rex over the past hundred years.

Sue is the largest and best-preserved Tyrannosaurus rex ever unearthed and is one of the most significant fossil finds to date. Because of its near completeness, the specimen has presented the scientific community with a variety of new evidence, and with it scientists made important new discoveries about the biology and evolution of Tyrannosaurus rex.

The exhibit runs through September 7, 2014 at the Montshire Museum of Science. It is the first time the exhibition has been to northern New England. Admission is $16 for adults, $14 for children 2-17, and free for Montshire members and children under 2 years of age. More information is available at montshire.org.

Get Outside with Valley Quest

Get out and explore the Upper Valley through new lenses this season with treasure hunts from Vital Communities’ Valley Quest program. Choose your quest, follow the clues, find the box, and collect the stamp impression. Some Quests are ecological, some are cultural, some are both – but all are fun!

Lebanon is featured in this year’s Upper Valley Farm Super Quest, which takes questers to 12 farm-related destinations around the region. Explore, learn, eat, enjoy – and find the hidden word at each location. Once you collect all the words, unscramble the letters and solve a puzzle to earn a special patch from Vital Communities and be entered in a grand-prize drawing.

More information is available at vitalcommunities.org/superquest or by emailing laura@vitalcommunities.org.

Greenway Launches Public Campaign

Supporters of the Mascoma River Greenway will mark the start of their public fundraising campaign with a downtown event on June 7. Beginning at noon in Colburn Park, participants can attend a 15-minute presentation about the greenway project, listen to live music, talk with volunteers, and take a “quest” along the newly established sections of the Mascoma River Greenway, which connects the end of the Northern Rail Trail in downtown Lebanon with homes and businesses in West Lebanon.

Volunteers are already working hard to both clear and build the new greenway, and raise the estimated $2.2 million it will take to realize their vision. Once the project is completed, 63 percent of residences in the City of Lebanon will be within one mile of the Mascoma River Greenway, a safe, pleasant, car-free route for travel between Lebanon and West Lebanon. Learn more at mascomagreenway.com.

The Mascoma River Greenway launch celebration will be held in conjunction with the annual Bike Rodeo, hosted by the Kiwanis Club and Lebanon Police Department. That event takes place June 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Witherell Recreation Center’s outdoor basketball courts downtown. Attendees can get their bikes registered and tuned up, learn about bike safety, and purchase bike helmets at discounted prices.
The first month of my maternity leave made me recall a scene from Marisa de Los Santos’ book Love Walked In: eleven-year-old Claire and her mother are driving to the grocery store when suddenly her mother stops and asks Claire to get out. “I will be right back,” she says before driving off, leaving Claire waiting on the side of the road. Several hours pass before she realizes her mother isn’t going to return. While I would never abandon my child like Santos’ character, I do understand how the constant demands of motherhood leave many overwhelmed and salivating for more freedom. How weeks of isolation and loneliness make your child some sort of Wilson: unresponsive but your only companion on the island to witness the suffering of your mental health. I understand how a small relief like going to the store magnifies how close you are to an escape. I’ll be right back.

Turns out, this mom thing is hard. Which is why, according to anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, author of Mother Nature, humans evolved as cooperative breeders, which makes us struggle to raise offspring without a helper. Good Beginnings of the Upper Valley is here to offer that help. Established in 1986 by a group of women in Hanover at St. Denis parish, the free home-visit program offers 90 trained volunteers who serve about 130 families annually. Volunteers visit once a week for a few hours to help with chores and errands. The program also works with women prenatally when they are put on bed rest.

Denise Dame, executive director of Good Beginnings of the Upper Valley (GBUV), looks like a great mother; pink lipstick, blonde hair, all smiles. My two month old son, Red, accompanied me to meet her. I couldn’t find a babysitter.

“Don’t worry. Not everyone can say this, but here at GBUV, this is what we do.” She sang. “We are all about babies. I’m always surprised at the lack of support for any new mother. Just because you are well educated and financially secure doesn’t mean you are going know what to do when you have a new baby.” Denise is certainly empathetic, lighting up at the mention of new babies and deflating with exasperation when it comes to the emotional roller coaster of caring for a newborn.

“I just think there should be more programming available for any new parent. It’s not just the low-income moms who need support. A lot of people don’t have anyone to call when their baby is crying for three hours straight. You need to have someone you can lean on.”

Often, volunteers maintain their relationships with families, going on to attend birthday parties and even kindergarten graduations. They also connect new mothers with each other, said Dame.

“Volunteers remember what it was like to have a new baby. How wonderful it was to have help if they were lucky enough.” Dame lets out girlish laugh and her gaze drops to the sleeping baby on my chest. “To meet a new baby is really quite a privilege and really fun!”

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See “Spotlight On Our Sponsors” on page 23
How many people have you met that have shared a lifetime dream or fantasy that actually became reality? Chances are you can count them on one hand.

For Lebanon’s John Fenley, a well-known disability rights advocate, his journey to nirvana is miraculously close at hand.

Dave Nelson

Striding every step of the way with John will be his closest confidant Lisa Green – remarkable duo whose dedication and perseverance place them in the “Super Hero” category.

John has overcome obstacles that would stop an ordinary person from harboring dreams of accomplishing miracles. Diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of three, he has endured four brain surgeries and has been declared legally blind. Lisa is the parent of a 22-year-old son with autism and epilepsy. When the two met it didn’t take long for them to start sharing a dream that one day there would be a place where John and his friends could hang out, and take classes ranging from arts and crafts to life skills. Lisa longed for a place where she could experience peace of mind knowing that her son would be safe when she needed time away.

Today they comprise Lebanon’s version of the “Dynamic Duo.” Their passionate hard work will become tangible sometime in May or June when the new Spark Community Center will swing open its doors to welcome residents of the Upper Valley with open arms.

“We are in negotiations right now for a location in downtown Lebanon,” David said, flashing his infectious smile. “It is too early to announce the site, but I’ll tell you one thing: It will be a bright, sunny place open to everyone. We are so excited it’s hard to contain ourselves.”

The concept is based on Zack’s Place in Woodstock, Vermont, as well as Life Art in Keene and Great Bay Services in Portsmouth. The special gathering place is long overdue for the Upper Valley.

“When we discussed this type of community center with folks from around both states, the general reaction was, you mean Lebanon doesn’t have a place like that? This will be a place where we can focus on a person’s abilities, not their disabilities. There are senior centers, schools and day care for kids, and workplaces for most adults to spend their days. But what about the adults who don’t fit into any of those categories? We need a place where adults with special needs can engage in life instead of letting it pass by.”

That is how both John and Lisa summed up the Spark effort. How the new center got its namesake is also an intriguing tale with a life of its own. John had a childhood dream of becoming an artist or a writer. He started drawing cartoon figures and came up with a loveable figure named Sparky.

“It was based on a spark plug. I pulled up a picture of one on the computer and created the character. It has become our logo,” he said. “Why a spark plug? A spark plug is an ignition device, and we are about to ignite the entire Lebanon community.”

This past March, A VA Gallery hosted a gala event to publicly announce the plans for the Spark Community Center. John, who serves as president of the local self-advocacy group Upper Valley Neighbors, and Lisa, who is a member of the Upper Valley Parents Task Force, gave an emotional and impassioned plea for community support. Also speaking that evening were Dail and Norm Frates from Zack’s Place.

The funding goal set for Spark is around $130,000, and to date the response has been very positive. It brought out that warm smile on John’s face once again.

“T remembered when our first check for $10,000 arrived,” he said. “It just blew my mind at the time. This was actually happening. I was really freaked out!”

Both John and Lisa acknowledge the gains they have accomplished while noting they have a long way to go on their journey. To that end, they urge anyone interested to contact them at sparkcommunitycenter@gmail.com or (603) 359-7116.
job to pay off my student loans. My friend Izzy and I are planning on traveling through Western Europe during the beginning of 2015. Until then, I will be working to earn money to fund this excursion. I am so looking forward to graduating; it will be nice to get out of Lebanon and expand my global perspective.”

Emma Poplack – Lebanon

“Next year, I am off to Stanford University to study who-knows-what. Right now, I’m a 50-50 split between terrified and excited. I’m terrified to do something so different from everything I know, but I’m also thrilled to be taking advantage of the next four years to experience new things. I’m hoping to study everything, from math to history to dance. I’m definitely looking forward to more sunshine and more days above freezing! Most of all, I’m excited to be moving on from high school. After four years, I’m ready to try something new and have more freedom and opportunity. So while I’m dreading that June deadline, I also can’t wait for it to come.”

Ian Girdwood – Lebanon

“After my experience this past summer working on an archaeology dig in England, I’ve dreamed of pursuing archaeology as a career. After graduation this spring, I plan on heading off to college, majoring in anthropology at either St. Lawrence University or George Washington University. While I’m sad to be saying goodbye to old friends, I’m excited to meet interesting people and make new friendships. I can’t wait to take advantage of study abroad programs and travel the world, hopefully taking part in some more summer archaeology digs. While my time here in Lebanon has been great, and left me with many memories that I treasure, I think I am finally ready to go out and see what this world has to teach me!”

Kaylee Rogers – Grantham

“I plan on attending UNH for a major in political science and a minor in some form of history. I really want to use my degree for something with politics or in law. We live in an era with so many national and world issues, and I want to use politics and the government to give people a voice and help out those suffering in the United States and around the world. The U.S. has such power and influence around the globe, and I want to be a part of that! I’m so excited to graduate and use my independence to lead me wherever I end up. I want to get out into the world and make a name for myself.”

Kenny Weitzman – Lebanon

“I’ve been accepted to UNH, UVM, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Rochester, and Tufts University. Tufts is my top choice for now. I’m looking to study political science, international affairs, and economics. I’m excited to make new friends and have great new life experiences. I’m both very excited and somewhat apprehensive..."
about graduating, because while I’ve spent a lot of time here and I’ve definitely gained something from my four years of high school, I think the opportunities I’ll be offered in college will exceed those I can find at LHS.”

Kelsie Atwater – Plainfield

“Next fall I will be attending Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y. Colgate first came on my horizon freshman year, but I knew it was the school for me the first time I put foot on campus junior year. I applied and was accepted Early Decision. I am extremely excited. My current plan is to major in neuroscience and then continue on to a career in the medical field. Graduating high school is bittersweet. I am ready to move on to the next stage of my life and out of the bubble I grew up in, but I will also miss the people and places that have surrounded me for the past 17 years of my life.”

Jake Jasinski – Lebanon

“After graduation I will be studying computer science at college. I am incredibly excited to be able to get a change of pace and a breath of fresh air. I am most anticipating a different living style, and being able to take the classes which I specifically choose. Graduating feels awesome, but bittersweet. Every time I think about it I can’t help but thinking that I won’t be seeing most of my friends for much longer. Although graduation will be an amazing culmination of 12 years of hard work and I look forward to an exciting and fresh next four years, I will always remember my friends from Lebanon.”

Yen Truong – Lebanon

“I can’t believe I’m graduating; I can’t believe I’ll be leaving my teachers and my high school friends! Without familiar faces, I will be quite frightened, but I am excited for college nonetheless. I’m going to Dartmouth in the fall. My long-term goal is to be a pediatrician. I love children, and if I become a successful doctor, I would have enough money to open an art therapy clinic. Art is a great way to have fun and connect with different people, and I’d like to give my patients that opportunity.”

Meet Sue.

May 17–September 7, 2014

Montshire Museum of Science

This exhibition was created by The Field Museum, Chicago, and made possible through the generosity of McDonald’s Corporation.
PROTECT AND SERVE – continued from page 1

the community. He serves with pride and compassion.”

Kapuscinski, 45, has been a member of the Lebanon Police Department for four years. He and his wife Tracey have five children, and they have connected with the Lebanon community in every aspect. Already Kapuscinski has earned one stripe on his dark blue uniform shirt, and his maturity is a definite asset in dealing with the public and his fellow officers.

Asked to put in a few words about what traits he brings to his position, he offered a thoughtful response.

“I would say helpfulness, teaching, being proactive, and having awareness of the people you are dealing with are the most important. Perhaps the most important thing about this job that I’ve learned is that you have to take a neutral position at all times.”

Kapuscinski got into law enforcement at a later stage than many of his counterparts, but it proved the right career move.

“I was always interested in law enforcement even back in high school,” he explained. “However, I took a sales position and worked at that until I was laid off. Having time on my hands, I had to make a decision about what I wanted to do for work for the next 20 years or so. I saw an advertisement that Lebanon was looking for a police officer, so I applied. That seemed like a great opportunity to get involved in this community.”

He quickly discovered this decision would involve an uphill journey that got steeper with each step.

“1’ll never forget that day that I showed up to take the test. There must have been 50 applicants present,” Kapuscinski noted. “Only about seven of us were called back, and eventually three of us qualified and I was hired. That was the toughest application process I’ve ever encountered!”

Now when Officer Kapuscinski slides into his blue and white cruiser to start his shift, he is a very focused, and a positive attitude rides along with him.

“Sometimes you just have to step back from any negativity you encounter and try to be more understanding of the people you are dealing with. That’s so important. When I first started I was told that I would have to deal with 10 percent of 90 percent of the people in this community. It proved to be correct. Repeat offenders are the biggest problem.”

While no one likes to see those flashing blue lights behind them, Officer Kapuscinski notes that most of his encounters are treated with respect and courtesy.

“I find that the majority of people are concerned that I’ve pulled them over, of course, but treat me with respect. To get respect you have to give respect. I would say the Lebanon community receives us in that fashion.”

The City of Lebanon affords a special challenge to the Lebanon Police Department. According to the 2012 census, the City’s population was listed as 13,483. However, during the daylight hours that figure does not really represent the true work load for the department, Kapuscinski explained.

“With all the businesses here in Lebanon, the hospital, the airport, and the shopping center, the number of cars passing through here climbs to as high as 30,000 on a given day. That is a lot to contend with. It’s also a lot of area to cover, as well. It keeps us busy and is a big responsibility.”

It has been firmly established that being a law enforcement officer is a dangerous profession. It is flashed across the news channels daily. Does that factor creep into Officer Kapuscinski’s thought process?

“Oh, it’s there in my mind sometimes,” he mused. “I get a chuckle though when people say, hey, this is Lebanon, New Hampshire. Nothing ever happens here! That simply is not true. It’s part of the job.”

A copy of Lebanon Police Department’s mission statement hangs on the wall of the department’s Poverty Lane facility, constructed in 1992. In part, that statement declares the following: “As members of the Lebanon Police Department we pride ourselves on promoting and delivering a safe environment in the heart of the Upper Valley. We will make a difference!”

When you see Officer Kapuscinski on patrol in Lebanon, rest assured he is following that credo and he is making a huge difference in our community.
For Stefan Van Norden, making a film about the history of the brick trade in Lebanon was not exactly the original plan. As a professional gardener, Van Norden had always wanted to make a film to inspire others to take up the hoe and spade to create their own perennial gardens.

But fate being fate, Van Norden went with the flow, and in 2012 he funded, researched, wrote, directed, filmed, and produced Hand of Brick on a shoestring budget. The only job left was editing the film, which was done by Chris Heidelberg.

Why a film about bricks instead of perennial gardens? “I went to see the kilns when I was 18 or 19. Years later when I returned and saw the condition they were in, I wanted to preserve the kilns on film before they collapsed. It’s a way of life that’s gone.”

The public response to Hand of Brick has been a great success for Van Norden and Heidelberg. “I was going to put it on YouTube with my gardening videos,” says Van Norden. Instead, the film premiered at AVA Gallery last fall to more than 200 people, and is scheduled for a spot on New Hampshire Public Television. Hand of Brick was also recently featured in the local filmmakers screening at the White River Indie Film Festival, and Van Norden is submitting it to other documentary film festivals. “A lot of people have seen it, and they enjoy the human part of it. They don’t necessarily care about bricks.”

At the AVA premiere, Van Norden and Heidelberg, like many artists showing their work publicly, wondered how the film would go over with the audience. “When it came to some of the interviews that were humorous, and the audience laughed all together, I knew it had an entertainment quality.” Van Norden credits the workers in the film for making Hand of Brick a great story.

But gardening remains Van Norden’s true passion. Encouraged by the success of Hand of Brick and what he has learned about filmmaking, Van Norden is enthusiastically advancing the perennial garden project. Plans are for a bigger budget, and interviewing gardeners in England, the West Coast, Monticello, Pennsylvania, and New York. Van Norden has been bitten by a storytelling bug – and it’s not your average variety garden pest.

“I’ve received some donations and have some people lined up. I’ve never done fundraising before, but at some point we’ll do a Kickstarter campaign,” says Van Norden. “I want to make a film that is about why to garden, not how to garden.”

The film will be directed at a broader and younger audience. Van Norden feels that the knowledge of the perennial garden is not being passed down to the younger generations. “I’m trying to inspire people to come in to the garden and give back to the garden some of what it’s given to me.”

“Making a film is more complicated than it looks,” says Van Norden. “For Hand of Brick, I used Adobe Premiere to edit the footage, and I was calling Chris every five minutes. I could see what I wanted to do with the film, but I couldn’t do it. He took my vision (that’s what a really good editor does) and used the technology to make it happen.”

Van Norden says filmmaking is a fascinating process he just fell into. “One of the things I learned is that today’s technology allows people like me to make a film like this. Twenty years ago I would never have been able to do this.”

Even with its small budget, making Hand of Brick had its challenges. “At one point I almost gave up on it. It took a year and a half. My co-worker Norm Porter really encouraged me to stick with it because it was a really important subject. I’m glad I did.”

Lucky for us, with gardening season just around the corner, Van Norden’s original film idea is back in the limelight.
Starr Hill: Laurel Letter’s Place for Us

Ed. Note: Jeanie McIntyre is President of Upper Valley Land Trust and was a friend of Lebanon resident Laurel Letter, who died earlier this year. This article is adapted from the original published in March at uvlt.org.

Laurel Letter was not a conservation leader. At least that’s what she would have said. She would say that she did not have expertise or confidence, she would ask for advice about next steps. She would offer to assist, to gather information. She would make it easier for others to lead – actually, she made it impossible for others not to lead. That’s how Laurel Letter made things happen.

In the 1980s, Laurel knew her Young Street neighborhood in Lebanon as well as anyone, and she especially knew that a small patch of nature was wedged between the close blocks of homes and the Interstate highway. She treasured the importance of this little piece of forest and boulders, with its vernal pool and wetlands. So when the Upper Valley Land Trust came into existence, Laurel was one of our earliest visitors, with stories of children building forts among the rocks, and adults stepping into the woods for quiet evening walks. Laurel’s patch of nature was called “Starr Hill.” A portion of it was owned by the City of Lebanon, but there were two undeveloped tracts that belonged to a developer who planned to construct condominiums.

I was new at UVLT, and only working part time when Laurel got the idea to conserve Starr Hill. In those early years I’m sure there were weeks when she was in the office more than I was. To begin with, she first had to figure out what the city owned, which led her to research and map a catalog of all city-owned properties of conservation interest (no list existed at that time). Then she needed to explain to city leaders why the ownership at Starr Hill should be expanded and why it should be conserved. And how conservation easements work. And how it would be paid for (but that part comes later).

To be honest, Laurel also had to persuade UVLT that the conservation of Starr Hill would be valuable. It’s not a big area and it doesn’t hold rare or unusual features — it’s not “charismatic.” But it is loved. That was the truth that Laurel presented every time she walked through our door.

Laurel’s efforts went on over years. The property went on the market, there were legal notices about tax and mortgage delinquency, and issues about development capacity and city regulations. Laurel, ever optimistic, wrote letters and copied the legal notices. She would arrive breathless and cheerful in our fourth floor offices over Colburn Park, bringing us news and eager for her next assignment. She would depart for City Hall with a list of tasks and a happy smile. Back and forth.

And then… it worked! And as the pieces came together, Laurel revealed her most incredible act of leadership. She and her husband Sid took out a second mortgage on their home in order for the acquisition and conservation of the Starr Hill property to proceed. They borrowed the maximum amount the bank would allow. The Conservation Commission approved a $10,000 expenditure from the city’s Conservation Fund. The deal was done.

In the years that followed, few Lebanon residents knew that Sid and Laurel were making payments on the debt they bore for Starr Hill.

The first time I monitored a conservation easement, I called on Laurel Letter. It was early November, hunting season. We walked all over Starr Hill together. She encouraged me to scramble up one of the big boulders so she could take a photo. We got cold in the wind where the property was more open. Then we returned to her modest home to warm up. We sat together and talked.

The details of that day are memories that I treasure — Laurel’s pure joy in knowing that Starr Hill was secure for all time. Her humility, her generosity, her care for her neighbors. A leader by doing: gracious, modest, dogged, loving.

Laurel Sherman Letter died on March 13, 2014. Community members who knew Laurel, love Starr Hill, support UVLT and conservation in Lebanon, or just wanted to get outside on Earth Day walked together in her memory at Starr Hill on April 22.

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Co-op Food Stores: New Park Blooms in Lebanon

Now that spring has arrived, the Co-op Food Stores are helping to create a new park in Lebanon. Conceptualized by Eagle Scout Jake Jasinski in 2012 as part of his community service merit badge, last April, Co-op Beverage Director Matt Szczesiul committed to finishing it.

“I saw it as a way to get the Co-op’s volunteer program off the ground. And it’s a pet project for me, because it’s my neighborhood and I want it to be nice,” said Szczesiul, who lives on South Street and is an avid biker.

The wedge of land measures about an acre along the Mascoma River, tucked in on the other side of the old train tunnel from the municipal parking lot behind Lebanon College. The old train trestle there is being renovated into a sun deck, with the work-in-progress Mascoma River Greenway cutting right through it.

Building and maintenance of the park is volunteer-based. Many who work on the park, a group of about 20, are Co-op employees and Szczesiul’s friends.

“I think enough people saw me down there mowing by myself. So when they asked me about it, I said ‘Come mow with me!’” he said.

Szczesiul admits his optimism in planning, sharing that he hoped to open the park last August until the municipal formalities and zoning requirements put the time-table in perspective. Relaying his current struggle with vines that won’t budge and weeds that won’t quit, Szczesiul states realistically they hope for a ribbon cutting in July.

Szczesiul recalls visiting the park’s location on the lookout for things to be corrected. He was pleased to find some people having lunch. It reminded him why he embarked on this endeavor and gave him a glimpse of his park beginning to bloom.

For more information about the Co-op Food Stores and their community work, visit coopfoodstore.com.

S.A.V.E.S.

Lebanon local Allen Wachter practices his veterinarian and humanitarian efforts regionally and overseas. In addition to acting as Stonecliff Animal Clinic’s primary care doctor, he also provides care at Small Animal Veterinary Emergency Services (S.A.V.E.S). S.A.V.E.S. was opened in the summer of 2009 by the former owners of the Stonecliff Animal Clinic. The facility provides emergency and critical care to dogs and cats of the Upper Valley – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

With 33 years in veterinary medicine, Wachter was recently honored as a Fulbright Scholar Specialist and will serve in sub-Saharan Africa teaching veterinarians next year. He received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Cornell University in 1981. He is also a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager. He began his career in the area by providing veterinary medicine and surgical care at Stonecliff in Bradford, Vermont.

In addition to medicine, Wachter has dedicated himself to pastoral education. He has been an associate pastor and senior pastor, and received his Doctor of Ministry from George Fox Seminary in 2011. He continues as an instructor of pastoral education courses with the Free Methodist Church of North America. His work within the church expands across continents to Africa, where he has assisted in establishing churches in Zambia.

Along with serving as assistant professor at the Veterinary Science Department at the State University of New York at Delhi and publishing for the Large Animal Nursing Laboratory, Wachter has also authored the fiction book Dance of the Bees. The fable tells the story of five bees who must change their long-practiced ways in order to save the hive from a threatening honey badger. The book was inspired while on a mission trip to Zambia, during which Wachter experienced personal attacks on his advocacy work. Dance of the Bees reflects Wachter’s observation of a universal resistance to change within the church as well as in people’s own lives.
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