

WHEN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, WE ARE THERE WITH YOU.

#ThereWithYou

The world is a very different place now than it was just a month ago.

Stay-at-home orders are in place for both New Hampshire and Vermont. Non-essential businesses have closed, temporarily we hope, and traffic has slowed to a crawl.

Even in rural New England, the change in pace is striking. Most of us have not seen anything like this in our lifetimes.

The impacts of COVID-19 are unprecedented. And, at least for the next few weeks, those impacts will be unwavering.

Here at the *Journal Opinion*, we face challenges as well. Not only has advertising declined as businesses have shuttered, but gathering news is a challenge with the cancellation or postponements of events, programs and meetings.

Nevertheless, we will continue to publish every week and be there with you every step of the way. The size of the paper may be reduced, but we will continue to cover local news, town and school business, and the people and places that touch the lives of our readers.

And we're hardly alone. Despite

the dramatic interruption to daily life, we have already seen our communities confront the challenges of this new era head-on. While our health care providers are on the front lines during this global health emergency, the rest of us will support those efforts the best we can.

Much of the time will be spent at home to maintain physical distancing, venturing out only for essentials—essentials provided by local businesses and services.

Now more than ever, it is

See #ThereWithYou on page 2

Pandemic brings instant innovation to schools

by Lillian Gahagan

WOODSVILLE—The COVID-19 pandemic has brought everyone home.

All residents in both states have been told to stay put, going out for only basic necessities such as food and medicine.

School buildings have been shuttered since roughly the third week of March. And, both New Hampshire and Vermont have extended the period of time that the doors will remain closed.

New Hampshire has pushed back the date when the buildings might reopen to May 4. In Vermont, all K-12 schools will remain closed for the remainder of the academic year.

School districts have pivoted to a system not used extensively before—one that was developed over just a few days when the first directive to close was issued. This is called "remote learning" where all K-12 students are being educated at home.

To illustrate how this works and

what the typical school day looks like, Laura Sjolander of Woodsville, a parent and 6th grade teacher at Haverhill Cooperative Middle School, helped explain what remote learning means and how it functions.

According to Sjolander, the remote learning model was organized and put in place in about three days in her district. Administrators set up training for teachers so that they would be able to use various applications such as Google Meet and Google Classroom.

With these tools, students and teachers could hold classes online, creating a live, interactive classroom. A schedule was suggested so that teachers could organize these live events for students to check into. The remote classroom was born.

Students now log into their computers from home at the prescribed time. There, they can see

See Remote learning on page 5

TM outlines early COVID-19 response

by Alex Nuti-de Biasi

NORTH HAVERHILL—Haverhill Town Manager Brigitte Codling said during Monday night's selectboard meeting that the town has already logged an initial request for FEMA assistance as a result of COVID-19.

She said is aware of lost revenue resulting from the cancellation of the town's recreation programming. Meanwhile, the town has already incurred expenses as a result of the pandemic after installing plexiglass shields in the town offices, purchasing software for online meetings, and installing drop boxes at the town offices for mail.

She said FEMA could potentially reimburse the town.

"All those things have to be tracked," she said. "My day is primarily consumed with COVID-19 planning and preparation."

In other business, Darwin Clogston was re-elected as chair in an unanimous vote. Matthew Bjelobrck was elected vice chair.

"We're in some pretty tough times right now," Clogston said. "We really need to push forward. I appreciate your faith in me and I wish you a good year."

The meeting was the first one the selectmen held after the town meeting day election of newcomer Steve Robbins was confirmed in a recount.

Clogston welcomed Robbins to the board. Robbins is the former town health officer and emergency management director who resigned in December.

"We get hot," Clogston said

See Haverhill on page 4

Drivers line up for cheap gas

by Linda Duxbury

BRADFORD—Not so long ago, they were empty. But there was a steady stream of traffic at the gas pumps in downtown Bradford last week.

Lower fuel prices were a welcome relief for customers of Thomson Fuels. In 2018, Stacey Thomson stepped in and reopened the former Perry's Oil gas station on Main Street. The pumps had been idle since Perry's Oil was sold in 2015.

He is once again filling a need by offering lower fuel prices. According to a company announcement, "We want to do our part to help the community during this uncertain time. Thomson Fuels will be passing on the current market wholesale pricing decrease to our customers. While supplies last, we are offering a \$1.99 per gallon special price for fuel oil deliveries. Our regular gasoline price also reflects the current wholesale decrease. We are doing our best to help our customers based on the daily market price. Be safe."

On March 24, the time of Thomson's advertised special price for fuel oil, the gasoline price was \$1.75 per gallon.

"The prices are staying pretty stable so who knows how long we can do this," said manager Jay Clark. "We've had an excellent response and being able to do this at this crucial time is great."

Thomson is sanitizing the pumps twice a day. Susceptible community members who need gas may call the office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. and someone will offer assistance at the pumps.

Prices are down throughout the local area with regular unleaded prices ranging from \$1.99 to \$2.21 at seven area gas stations on March 25, according to a survey by *Journal Opinion* staff.

Matt Cota, executive director of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, told the *JO* that the demand for refined gasoline is off by 50 percent compared to other years.

"A significant amount of fuel is not being moved which has repercussions all across the country," he said.

See Gas on page 4

ECFiber explores local expansion

by Alex Nuti-de Biasi

FAIRLEE—On town meeting day, dozens of communities in the Northeast Kingdom, including Groton and Ryegate, voted to form a communications district designed to bring high-speed internet to an underserved part of Vermont.

The NEK Communications Union District is one of several community-based efforts in Vermont to build and deliver broadband internet infrastructure where telephone companies and large internet service providers have struggled.

Many of the CUDs have modeled their efforts on a 13-year-old entity that will soon consider building in two local towns. In February, the selectboard in West Fairlee voted to request membership in the communications dis-

trict. And during the past month, the Fairlee Selectboard has been mulling over a similar request.

The discussions come as ECFiber, or East Central [Vermont] Fiber, has nearly completed its buildout among its existing 24 member towns, including Chelsea, Thetford, and Vershire. It now has 4,200 customers in 23 towns. In a telephone interview, ECFiber Managing Director Chris Recchia said the organization expects to begin constructing its network in Hartford later this year.

With an end in sight to that initial buildout, he said ECFiber's board of directors formed an expansion committee a couple of months ago.

"It was logical to reach out to

neighboring communities," he said. So far, Windsor and West Fairlee have sent letters to the board requesting membership. Fairlee could join those two.

Fairlee Town Administrator Tad Nunez said COVID-19 has taken up the selectboard's time in recent weeks as the board continues to perform due diligence. They talked about at their meeting on March 30 and could take the issue up again during the next scheduled meeting on April 6.

Regardless, ECFiber broadband will not arrive in Fairlee or West Fairlee overnight. In fact, just because the towns have requested membership does not mean the

See Expansion on page 5



Several area restaurants remain open for takeout and delivery despite widespread closures. Tuttle's Family Diner in Wells River is one. While 'Stay Home' orders went into effect last week in both states, some essential businesses remain open.

COURTESY PHOTO BY GREG MATHIESON/MAI

Quarantines ordered for travelers

by Alex Nuti-de Biasi

BRADFORD—Citing increased community transmission of COVID-19 in other states, officials in both New Hampshire and Vermont are instructing returning snowbirds and other visitors to quarantine upon arrival.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott issued his latest emergency order on March 30, citing the increasing community transmission of the virus in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut as well the warming

weather that could entice Vermonters and second-home owners to move north as the virus spreads in other parts of the country.

Simultaneously, he warned visitors displaying symptoms or visitors from "hot spots" such as Florida, Louisiana, New York City, Detroit, and Chicago against traveling to Vermont. He also tightened restrictions on hotel lodging operations by banning online bookings for short-term rentals like AirBnB

and VRBO.

"If you don't need to come to Vermont, please don't," he said on Monday.

Separately, New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu told visitors they need to take the same measures, including isolating for at least seven days upon arrival.

"If you're coming from out of state, you need to self-quarantine,"

See Quarantine on page 4

Bradford businesses can tap local loan fund

by Alex Nuti-de Biasi

BRADFORD—Selectboard members approved an emergency measure last week to broaden access for local businesses to a municipal loan fund during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

During the regularly scheduled meeting on March 26, the selectboard approved a recommendation from the five-member Bradford Revolving Loan Committee, which oversees the fund and reviews applications. Specifically, the committee recommended increasing the amount available for emergency loans from \$500 to \$2,000 per borrower.

The committee made the changes "in hopes of providing assistance to local Bradford businesses and supporting our local economy during these unprecedented times of the coronavirus."

In addition, the selectboard initially capped the total amount available for the emergency loans at \$25,000. According to the annual town report, there was \$107,165 in the Bradford Revolving Loan Fund on Dec. 31, 2019.

Last week's selectboard meeting came one day after members of the loan committee met to make the recommendation. Selectboard members said they would revisit the terms and guidelines of the revolving loan at their next meeting on April 9, but they wanted to approve the emergency measure.

They agreed they did not want to make the total balance of the fund available for emergency loans, but wanted to take some urgent action on the fund.

"I think we need to do that," said selectboard member Carole Taylor.

"Holding off on any action may be problematic."

Taylor said they would not be handing out money to "just anybody." There is an application that prospective borrowers need to fill out. Applications are vetted and reviewed by the loan committee and the selectboard.

Revolving loan committee member Peter Terry said on March 31 that he was not aware of any applications made to the fund since the changes were made.

"This is a reminder that this is not free money," committee members added in a press release. "[It] is a loan to assist Bradford businesses in a time of emergency need."

According to the annual report, there were no new applications in

See Loan fund on page 4



Churches, are you holding virtual Easter services?
Send us your church name, web address where you can be found, the time you are live or the video is uploaded, and we will publish a list in the April 8 issue.



Viewpoints . . . Yours and ours

Editorial

Family, tech and a pandemic

As we rely on technology in this time of uncertainty to stay in touch with loved ones, business partners, students, teachers, and others, we share our fears and anxieties. This interruption, hopefully temporary, will nevertheless permanently change many ordinary practices and behaviors. It has no doubt instilled more appreciation for what we do have and who we love.

Families have a rare opportunity with this crisis to enjoy each other's company and have some time to do fun things together, maybe to learn more about their ancestors and how they themselves have arrived in the present moment.

What we remember as "normal life" is not the same today as it was yesterday. Who knows how long this present suspension of most systems will last?

But maybe one day in the future, we might remember today with gratitude for what we found out was the most important way to stay healthy and safe.

While the most important safeguard during this pandemic is that people need to stay apart as much as possible to remain safe and healthy, we hope that the most important lesson is that people need the closeness of their loved ones and their communities more than ever.

Letters

A message to the Bradford community

To the Editor:

These are challenging and uncertain times. We are all dealing with struggles that we never could have anticipated. It is more important than ever that we are here for each other, that we step up to help if we are able, and that we show compassion for our neighbors. We need each other for support and to feel less alone during a time that can feel quite scary. We can get through this together.

Over the last few weeks, a group of dedicated town volunteers has been working to ensure coordination between organizations responsible for food access, health access, emergency services, schools, town government, and more. We are calling this group, Bradford Resilience.

We will be sharing information and resources to help navigate the uncertainty that all of us are facing. We will be delivering information in a number of different formats. A town-wide mailing will be sent to all residents this week. Please do not throw this away. This mailing will include important links, communication channels, and critical phone numbers. We will be sure to post a copy of this mailing to the town website: <https://bradford-vt.us/covid19>

Please visit the town website to sign up as a volunteer and if you are in need of assistance, we will have a Needs Survey released shortly. It is more important than ever to engage with your community. We look forward to sharing resources with you over the weeks to come. We are all in this together and we will make it through but it is going to take time and frustrate many of us.

Keep calm, check on friends and neighbors, and practice physical distancing. Stop hoarding as this prevents others from getting the things they need. If we can all take a moment to allow the supply chains to catch up, there will be plenty enough for everyone. Those of us in emergency management have always said you should have two weeks of food, water, and supplies but more than that is unnecessary. It may feel like it, but the world is not coming to an end. Most importantly, try to relax, take a deep breath, and practice self-care. Hang in there.

Gary Moore, Bradford Emergency Management Director
Monique Priestley, Bradford Resilience Coordinator

Fishing and social distancing

To the Editor:

Fishing is an activity that I have done for virtually all my life. So, with all of these admonitions about social distancing, it was pretty easy for me to see that fishing is one activity that nearly everyone can enjoy, and one that is inherently "socially distancing."

In Vermont there is no crazier fishing circus than the April run of rainbows in the Willoughby River, which brings out throngs of anglers who line up on a short stretch of river in Orleans. Even at this angling jamboree, anglers are still about 6 feet apart. There is not a lot required to get started fishing. If you're older than 14, you will need an annual license—\$26 for a resident adult, or \$8 for youths 15-17. Vermont's Fish and Wildlife website, in addition to providing regulations, has a universe of useful information, on where and how.

You can easily set yourself up with a spinning rod-reel combination, some monofilament line, some hooks, a bobber or two, and a carton of worms for under a hundred dollars. Locally, Dick's Sporting Goods is currently selling a rod-reel combo for \$17.98! And, there is nothing wrong with sharing a rod within a family.

In Burlington, in addition to the Fishing Pier at the Waterfront, fishing is a permitted activity at all the parks that border Lake Champlain. The exceptions are the life-guarded beaches in the summer. The Winooski River is also an excellent fishing destination for locals, with many access points along designated trails.

Beyond that, Vermont has hundreds of lakes and ponds, and a thousand or more brooks, streams, and rivers. Unless you see a "No Trespass" sign, you can fish.

Hey, rain or shine, there's plenty of fresh air and fun for the family, or anyone who's inclined to give it a whirl. And, with luck, there may be a nice dinner too. Let's get fishing!

Peter Shea
Burlington, VT

Rural resiliency demonstrated by ensuring our children are fed

To the Editor:

Rural communities are showcasing resiliency by ensuring kids are fed during widespread school closures caused by the coronavirus.

With so many uncertainties surrounding us, where the next meal is coming from should not be one of them. This should especially not be a concern for growing young bodies who happen to be our rural legacy.

In West Point, Nebraska, all students will be provided free breakfast and lunch while school is closed. Households pick up meals at regular bus stops in town and in nearby communities the school also serves.

Other rural schools are running drive-through operations and working with local organizations and volunteers to make sure meals are delivered to students who most rely on this food—those receiving free and reduced meals. In addition, Chef Ann Foundation has put together guidance for schools looking for resources to respond during this time.

In 2018, school cafeterias served nearly 5 billion lunches nationwide—three-quarters were free or at a reduced price. A report found that children from food insecure households are more likely to eat school meals and receive more of their food and nutrient intake from school meals than other children. The numbers for free and reduced meals tend to be higher in rural areas.

In rural communities during crisis, we see something inspiring, something defiant. Because we are a resilient bunch, we band together and take care of each other. Rural people forge on, through the unknowns, even when there is no end in sight.

In these weeks, and potentially months to come, we will see rural resiliency, strength, and unity that prove no matter the challenge, our rural communities can, and will, rise to the occasion.

Sandra Renner, farm & community director
Center for Rural Affairs
Lyons, NE

Kindness

by Rebecca Farley

Kindness is not just another word. It needs action to truly be heard.

Words of kindness help more than you know, but bad words can hurt deep to the soul.

Harsh words and bad actions hurt the Lord too. So words of kindness are better to use.

Many things can go really wrong if kindness isn't hanging in there strong.

The Lord is watching over all you know. So kindness should be one of your main goals, and bring a smile to someone's soul.

For kindness will come back twofold.

Kindness can make someone a nice day for without kindness, life is dull, what more need I say.

So think before your actions come out for life is better with kindness no doubt.

ON THIS DATE

April is alcohol awareness month to help raise awareness about the problem of underage drinking. ###

April Fools Day, April 1, seems to have begun in France in 1564. It used to be New Year's Day, but the new year was changed to Jan. 1 that year. People who insisted on celebrating the "old" New Year became known as April fools, and it became common to play jokes and tricks on them. ###

On April 1, 1970, radio and television ads for cigarettes were banned by legislation signed by President Nixon. The ban went into effect on Jan. 1, 1971. ###

General Hospital make its television debut on April 1, 1963. ###

Physician William Harvey was born April 1, 1578 in Folkestone, England. He was the first to discover the mechanics of the circulation of blood. He died in Roehampton, England on June 3, 1657. ###

April is mathematics education month, national autism awareness month, national child abuse prevention month, national grilled cheese month, national lawn and garden month, national pecan month, national poetry month, national woodworking month, and national youth sports safety month.

American Life in Poetry

by Ted Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate

I've mentioned the anthology, "Local News: Poetry About Small Towns" from MWPH Books, P.O. Box 8, in Fairwater, Wisconsin. Here's one of the many poems I've enjoyed, by Scott Wiggerman, who lives in New Mexico. His latest book is "Leaf and Beak: Sonnets," published by purple flag, 2015.

Johnsburg

At the top of the hill, a towering Catholic church with Gothic spires,

below, a one-pump gas station, a beauty parlor with a picture window,

at the town's only four-way stop sign, a convenience store with a bike stand,

and three smoke-drenched taverns, their bars of the same solid wood

as the church's hard benches, only more polished, more worn down.

###

American Life in Poetry provides newspapers and online publications with a free weekly column featuring contemporary American poems.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The opinion page of the Journal Opinion is devoted to editorials, commentary and letters. The editorial on the left side under the heading editorial is the only column that expresses the opinions of the Journal Opinion. All others are the views and opinions of the authors only.

We encourage readers to comment on matters of interest and will publish letters regardless of their politics providing they are in good taste. We ask that you limit letters to 400 words or less and write no more than twice per month. All letters must be signed with contact information given for verification.

The publisher reserves the right to verify the accuracy of letters, edit letters for clarity, space and content, and limit the number of letters from any writer to two a month. Anonymous letters or letters judged to be libelous will not be published.

The deadline for letters and commentaries is Monday at noon. They may be mailed to the Journal Opinion, PO Box 378, Bradford, VT 05033, emailed to editor@jonews.com or faxed to (802)222-5438.

Take UVM survey on coronavirus

BURLINGTON—The impact of the coronavirus on the health care system and on financial markets is all too clear. But what about the stress it's putting on the food system and on those who are food insecure?

A survey was launched in Vermont on March 27 to determine those potential effects. The survey is being fielded by researchers at the University of Vermont and was developed in collaboration with colleagues at Johns Hopkins University.

Researchers plan to collect and analyze the results quickly enough that they could inform policies during the ongoing pandemic to reduce food insecurity, anxiety and suffering. They also hope to use the results of the Vermont survey to inform similar surveys in other states.

To take the survey, visit www.coronavirusfoodsurvey.com.

The survey asks respondents where they obtained food over the last year for themselves and their families and if availability from that source has changed since the coronavirus outbreak. It also asks how worried respondents are that the coronavirus will affect their access to healthy food and seeks to understand their perspectives overall on the outbreak.

Clara Martin appoints new director

RANDOLPH—The board of trustees of the Clara Martin Center has announced the appointment of Melanie Gidney to the role of executive director, following the retirement of Linda Chambers, who had served in the role since 1994. Gidney has been working on an interim basis in this role for the past year as a support to Chambers while she was on extended leave.

Gidney has been a leader at the agency for over 27 years, with a mix of clinical and administrative experience that has positioned her for this role. After starting at Clara Martin Center in 1992 as a case manager and then as an access/emergency clinician, she transitioned into various leadership roles that included human resources director, director of operations, and currently as the agency's director of quality assurance and systems improvement.

imperative that we support those local businesses—our friends and neighbors—who form the backbone of our communities. To that end, we unite with newspapers across the country in an effort started in the United Kingdom to let those businesses know that we stand with them.

In this week's issue, you will find stories and photos about businesses continuing to operate, discounted customer services for customers, and public entities supporting their constituents.

In the coming weeks, we will continue to profile those efforts. In the meantime, local communities are doing everything they can to highlight those efforts.

We also urge our readers to shop local, get takeout or delivery from a local restaurant, and use the website of a local business to order a product or service. There are efforts underway to build online directories of those businesses that continue to operate in some form or another.

One such effort is available through the Bradford town website where the Bradford Business Association has been developing a database. You can find it under "business directory" at www.bradford-vt.us

We know other efforts are underway in other towns and regions. Please let us know if you would like us to highlight a similar

listing in an upcoming edition.

As we noted last week, the rapidly changing environment in the era of COVID-19 makes building a weekly newspaper incredibly challenging. The news changes around the clock. Every other small business has to cope with the same dynamic.

Please be safe everyone. And readers, as you stay-at-home, please reach out with your photographs and story ideas and things you would like to read in the *JO*.

JAMES JOHNSON

BATH—James Hutchins Johnson was born in Bath on June 3, 1802 and went on to serve two terms in Congress from 1845-1849. He died in his hometown in 1887.

RICHARD MALLARY

BRADFORD—Richard Mallary was born on Feb. 21, 1929 in Massachusetts. The Bradford Academy graduate and former Fairlee farmer went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1972-1975.

HARRY HIBBARD

BATH—Harry Hibbard died in Massachusetts on July 28, 1872. The long-time Bath resident served in Congress from 1849-1855 and is buried at the Village Cemetery in Bath.

Rambling Reflections

Toilet paper madness

by Nessa Flax

No one has yet been able to explain to me the panicked toilet paper buying rages.

In the wake of the coronavirus onslaught, stores have not been able to keep the stuff in stock. As soon as shelves are refilled, they're nearly instantly empty.

I spoke with a worker at Ocean State Job Lot, who said he had rolled out seven pallets of toilet paper, one right after another. And each time, it was all gone when he came back with the next pallet. Now, I don't know how many cartons are on a pallet, but I'm confident it's a lot.

Shaw's, Walmart, Job Lot, and the Dollar Tree have all sported empty toilet paper shelves on the same day.

I understand the run on paper towels, for decontamination cleaning, especially for families with kids. But are we so afraid of our bodily functions that we're terrified to be without TP? And if you're stocking up for 14 days of a stay-at-home mandate, just how much can you use? Talking with a local pharmacist, I shared my

confusion.

"COVID-19 is not an intestinal virus," I said. "It's a respiratory virus."

"Makes no sense," he replied. "Shelves here are empty of toilet paper, but the medicine aisles of fever reducers and cough syrups are full!"

The panic for TP and staples is a national phenomenon, as we have seen on the national news. Sometimes the panic is downright crazy.

Hundreds of people jammed together in line to get into a California Costco: I don't get it. You're virus-aware enough to stock up, but endanger yourself by waiting close to a ridiculous number of people.

For days, a friend of mine could not find a single potato or onion in our local grocery stores. Ditto peanut butter, and bags of rice.

Finally, state and federal folks started to beg us not to hoard or stockpile, but to buy only what we need for two weeks at a time. We are making the situation worse. The truth is established supply lines deliver products to meet usual needs. Mass buying and empty shelves do not

indicate a shortage of TP or food.

On March 15, *The New York Times* ran an article titled "There is Plenty of Food in the Country."

"... the nation's network of food producers, distributors and retailers are stretched as never before. Industries that are calibrated to supply consumers with just enough of what they need on a given day cannot keep up with a nationwide surge of relentless shopping fueled in large part by fear."

I do not understand why stores took so long to set limits on how many high-demand products shoppers could buy at once. Finally, some stores are doing so.

The *Times* interviewed leaders in various sectors of the food industry, who all unequivocally stated that there is no shortage of food. But "they are battling a perception that the scary scenes at the grocery store reflect a fundamental breakdown."

Take a breath. Shop reasonably. You'll be helping to solve the empty-shelf problem.

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