



Transition

Artist Judith Giusto turned from fiber to metal and gem stones. Read her story in Arts + Leisure.



Faceguard

You may want to make a hand-sewn mask for Porter Hospital and for yourself. See Page 2A.



Holy Week

With Easter approaching we have included our annual Worship Directory inside today's edition.

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Porter transforms for virus surge

Hospital adding acute care beds

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Porter Hospital has doubled, from three to six, its number of “negative-pressure” rooms in anticipation of a surge in COVID-19 patients that could come within the next two

weeks, officials said on Tuesday.

Negative-pressure rooms are designed to prevent potentially contaminated air from spreading to other areas of the hospital. Lower air pressure in the patient’s room allows air to flow into the room but

not escape from it.

While the local hospital’s census as of Tuesday included no coronavirus-positive patients, Porter officials are gaining experience with the malady, which has turned into a global pandemic. As of this writing, Addison County had seen 23 people test positive for

the disease. Statewide, 293 people had tested positive thus far, and 13 have died.

Dr. Anna Benvenuto, Porter Medical Center’s chief medical officer, said the hospital’s affiliation with the University of Vermont Health Network will ensure greater (See Porter, Page 11A)

Curbside shopping easier than expected

By CHRISTOPHER ROSS

MIDDLEBURY — Like many of our neighbors in Addison County this time of year, my family has a number

of home-improvement and gardening projects we’re itching to get started on.

But during the coronavirus (See Curbside, Page 10A)

Lunches keep kids connected to schools

Staff, volunteers put out hundreds of meals a week

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — During the past few weeks Middlebury Union High School hasn’t been serving up as much nourishment for the mind as it typically does; the coronavirus has temporarily put a stop to that.

But the MUHS kitchen continues to serve up nourishment for the body — and indeed the soul — during an international pandemic that has kept students ensconced in their homes.

The Addison Central School District, and other public education hubs throughout the county, are making sure no child goes hungry. As in Addison Northwest, Mount Abraham and Otter Valley school districts, dedicated Addison Central School District employees, assisted by community volunteers, are rolling up their sleeves at the crack of dawn each weekday morning to assemble hundreds of breakfasts and lunches for kids who might otherwise go without.

And they’re doing it in spite of potential exposure to a virus that as of this writing had afflicted around 300 Vermonters and claimed at least 13 lives in the Green Mountain State.

“You play roulette every day,” a (See Meals, Page 9A)



ADDISON CENTRAL SCHOOL District board member Mary Gill, donned in protective mask and gloves, help load food onto buses that made deliveries to shut-in children throughout Bridport, Cornwall, Middlebury, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham and Weybridge.

Independent photo/John Flowers

Our public safety workers take care

EMTs, police and fire personnel are also ensuring their own well-being

By ANDY KIRKALDY

ADDISON COUNTY — While residents are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic by staying home, that’s not an option for those entrusted with public safety.

Emergency medical technicians, firefighters and police officers must still respond to accidents, crimes, fires and medical crises.

And more than ever they must be mindful of not endangering their health and that of those they serve.

City Police Chief George Merkel summed it up:

“We’ve got to continue to do our job, but we’ve got to be smart about it.”

And they must adapt to new guidelines that arrive steadily as experts learn more about the coronavirus threat.

“The recommendations are changing not even daily, it seems — sometimes it’s hourly,” said Middlebury Regional Emergency Medical Services (MREMS) Director Kate Rothwell. “But we’re all doing quite a good job keeping up with it. There’s a lot of networking and information sharing”

All agencies are limiting employees and volunteers’ exposure to COVID-19 by sending fewer of them into the field.

Middlebury Fire Chief David Shaw said leaders of all 17 county fire departments met in mid-March to plan how to do so.

“Addison County is pretty tight that way,” Shaw said. “The general theme was we’re going to try to do much more with far less.”

RESCUE SERVICES

Rothwell said MREMS is limiting not only the number of



MIDDLEBURY REGIONAL EMERGENCY Medical Services Director Kate Rothwell, shown at the recent Weybridge town meeting, said first responders are taking care not to become infected with coronavirus.

Independent file photo/John S. McCright

personnel on runs, but also contact with residents.

Two people will go out, but at first only one will be decked out in full personal protective equipment (PPE). That person will go into a residence to evaluate COVID-19 risk “from as much of a distance as they can,” Rothwell said.

If the situation warrants the other crew member will then also put on PPE.

Rothwell said MREMS is currently stocked with equipment, (See Public Safety, Page 8A)



By the way
The Addison County community is again showing its generosity and solidarity in times of crisis. Contributors have matched (two days early) a \$50,000 challenge recently issues by four anonymous donors, money that will support critical services to an increasing (See By the way, Page 10A)

When you’re on your own, we are there with you

By ANGELO LYNN

As the country faces one of the worst health care crisis of the past century, we at the Addison County Independent want you to know that we hear your concerns, your uncertainty, your desires to help others, and need to know how to stay safe and protect those around you. We’ve heard you through stories we’ve written, letters to the editor, calls and in personal notes to us.

We also want you to know we’re here for you, just as you have been here for us over the past 75 years.

We understand the importance of timely and trustworthy local news and want you to know we are resolute in our duty to continue providing you with the vital information you need

to stay safe and protect your loved ones, as well as to tell the broader story of our community through this pandemic and after.

Today, our lives have been turned upside down. Schools and colleges are closed; parents are struggling to juggle work and home life; businesses are scrambling to protect their employees while safeguarding their very futures; and bars, restaurants, inns, theaters, fitness centers, salons, retailers, the building trades and independent contractors, and so

many more, are in various states of closure and facing months of economic disruption and inevitable loss. Through it all, our mission is continue to produce dependable (See Message, Page 2A)

We also want you to know we’re here for you, just as you have been here for us over the past 75 years.

Vergennes teens lighten the mood

‘Spirit Week’ highlights online effort

By JOHN S. McCRIGHT

VERGENNES — Two sisters and a friend, who have been quarantining together at home in Vergennes, have begun an effort to create a sense of unity among their peers, and all Vermonters, who are feeling separated by the social distancing measures in place.

Jasmine Little and Kaitlyn Little (students at Vergennes Union High School) and friend Sydney Adreon (a Rice Memorial High School student) have created the idea of a statewide/national “quarantine/distance learning” spirit week, with each day of this week devoted to a different topic.

“We have noticed how much the state needs some light in this darkness,” Jasmine told the Independent in an email. “Each day (of the spirit week) is different. We hope to see people in Zoom classes and posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter of the statewide spirit, using the #vtwegothis hash tag.

“We want to see young and old participate, not just students and (See Teens, Page 11A)



JASMINE LITTLE, KAITLYN Little and Sydney Adreon of Vergennes have put together a Facebook page where Vermonters can share fun and encouraging messages about how they are managing social distancing. They have also set up a “Spirit Week” that begins on Monday.

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