



## Rainy Spring Festival Has Good Turnout

By Michael Bielawski

**HARDWICK** — In the minutes leading up to the start of the annual Spring Festival parade, the drizzle turned into a downpour. It looked like tough luck for this year's iteration of the longtime town tradition. However, shortly after the parade started, the rain lightened up. Fire trucks, Read and Puppet performers, steel-drum players from the Jeevudine Music School and many others marched along the parade route while throwing sugar beads to create little ones lining the streets.

Joe Brannon of Hardwick is in charge of organizing the much-anticipated duck-drop event. Hundreds of rubber ducks are marked with a number, were dropped from the fire department's ladder truck over a duck-shaped kiddie pool. Participants purchased numbers for the ducks and the person whose duck number is closest to the target was half of the money raised. The rest of the money went to recreational projects, art projects, and including possibly a park revitalization project at Middle Pond.

"We used to do a duck race in the river, but it got to be too dangerous," Brannon said. "I came up with the idea to have them drop them on the street."

The target was to sell 400 duck numbers. Hours before the drop, Brannon said they were closer to 500. In the end, 450 rubber ducks were sold for \$1,005. Brannon, Bill and Robin Durkee of Woodbury had the winning duck.

The human tractor pull was another popular event. Blake Curtis from Stannard was a member of the winning team.

"We came, we saw, we pulled the truck," he said joking. "We couldn't let the farmers, the Black Dirt Farm team win."

Holly Currier of the Recreation Committee ran the "kiss peddle" pull, with kids taking turns pulling a miniature truck. She said that despite the weather it was business as usual.

Connie Bellavance, past president and current volunteer for the Kiwanis organization, was busy preparing grilled food. "I said that despite the weather it was business as usual."

"We sold out of food last year and we are doing very well right now," she said.

Local resident Nancy Natterman helped set up an obstacle course for kids that proved to be very popular.

Emily Laxner of the Jeevudine Music School led a steel drum band, which performed in the parade and continued performing remnants of popular rock songs at Albans Field. The band played in support of efforts to save the honey bee. Laxner said efforts spearheaded by Rep. Joseph Trinneer (D-Calderwood) of Stannard to push a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides, which endanger bees, was unsuccessful this year but got the conversation started.

Deborah Hart, operations manager, said **SESTIVAL 2**

Andrew Whitcomb (left) and Travis Tombley (right) of L & S Property Holdings Inc.'s lay out Hardwick's new telematic crosswalks at the intersection of Main and Hill. The new crosswalks should be more durable than earlier crosswalks. Tombley said that while the new crosswalks are slightly colored on the pavement, summer traffic should shape them to the road so snowplows don't carve them.

## CAE's Vermont Farm Fund Passes Lending Milestone

by Doug McClure

**HARDWICK** — In seven years, the Vermont Farm Fund (VFF) has lent over \$1 million to Vermont farmers and food producers to boost the local agricultural economy. The Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) said in a press release. The exact figure: \$1,059,094 in 71 individual low-interest loans.

The VFF was started in 2011 by Pete's Greens of Craftsbury and the CAE, as a response to the losses Tropical Storm Irene wreaked on Vermont. The loans are not just for emergencies, but also for growth and expansion. Some recipients of funding have gone through more than one round of loans.

"The funding for these low-interest loans comes from individual farmers and family foundations. Each tax-deductible gift supports a virtuous cycle, where payments from one generation of loans finances the next. Funds are lent to a farm, repaid, and loaned out again and again," the release said.

Loan recipients in our area include: Solversons in Marshfield, which is a "family-run fermented foods company," **See FUND 2.**



Maria Adochino (left), Maria Adochino-Gerdinich and Tori Restuccia look over the new Cabot Artisan Gallery, which opened on Saturday. The gallery, located in the Cabot village business district on Main Street, is open Friday through Monday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## New Artisan Gallery Open in Cabot Village

by Will Waters

**CABOT** — Opening day for the Cabot Artisan Gallery went according to the weather. Customers came when the rain took a break on Saturday morning and were more sparse when it poured. Those customers who were in the gallery when the rain began falling stayed until the downpour stopped. Apparently rain on opening day is not all bad.

The gallery on Main Street in the business section of Cabot village is in the former white building at the intersection of Whittier Hill Road and Main Street. It is a short walk from Cabot Creamery. The cream-

ery Visitors' Center pointed visitors to the gallery.

Jan Westervelt hosted the building to start a gallery in cooperation with the Cabot Community Association. The CCA is the owner/operator of the gallery, which is managed by Stacey Ducharme. Ducharme formerly ran the Artist's Hand, in Montpelier. Westervelt said the opening had a good number of visitors and many sales. Stacey and Mandy also had a flow of browsers, as some buyers, as well. Westervelt said most were local people who seemed interested in having on **See GALLERY 4.**



Photo by Vanessa Fournier. Two first-graders dropped 400 rubber ducks from Hardwick's rubber truck Saturday at Albans Field. The 5250 Recreation Committee fundraiser raised \$1,005. Bill and Robin Durkee of Woodbury had the winning duck.

## New Homeschooling Group Earns High Praise from Expert

by Michael Bielawski

**HARDWICK** — A new homeschooling co-op, run by local home educators, will be considered by Rep. and Sen. Fred Ryan, in the initiative to expand public education. Retta Dunlap, Woodbury resident and director of the Vermont Home Education Network, said the group will help parents and children. "The network's resources and connections they need to succeed."

Dunlap said the group is designed to gather both children and parents into what will be called The Home Education Network.

The program targets children ages two to six, but younger children will be considered. This coming fall semester will run from September to December. Sessions Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The program is still being determined, but they are already looking for members in Woodbury or Greensboro.

Dunlap is now directly involved in the new co-op, but nonetheless welcomes the development.

"I'm excited," she said. "This coming fall semester will run from September to December. Sessions Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The program is still being determined, but they are already looking for members in Woodbury or Greensboro."

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Weather conditions distorted the fireworks that closed out Spring Festival. One observer thought a mortar invasion was in bloom.

## Business Accelerator Preparations Begin

by Doug McClure

**HARDWICK** — The Yellow Barn Business Accelerator (YBBA) project is in its early planning stages for completion, according to the Center for an Agricultural Economy's (CAE) Sarah Waring.

Town Manager Jan Jewett said the CAE, the town, and the Northeast Vermont Development Association (NVDA) have applied for a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), but with funds left over from the original grant, site surveying will begin soon.

"We're looking at delineating where the wetlands are, where the floodplain is and trying to generate topographical information about the property so we know what we have as a base property. And then we want to look at all our permitting needs, which would be water, wastewater, highway access, and anything else that we might need to have to do a build-out of that facility."

Jewett said the town has signed a Letter of Intent with the NVDA. "We're going to look at our permitting process. We still need to have to do a build-out of that facility."

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## Cabot School Budget Passes

by Will Waters

**CABOT** — Voters approved a budget for the 2019 school year. The budget is \$1,139,019.19 for a total of 454 ballots. It was the third budget proposal sent to voters this year. It was the first one that came in under the excess spending threshold that triggers a penalty tax.

A statement, Washington Northeast Supervisory Union 30 said, "The voters of Cabot today approved the budget for FY19 (2018-19 school year) by a margin of 200 votes and 101 no. Until today, no school budget had been able to do so after employee contracts teach-

ers and support staff for next year, or to offer contracts to candidates that will be filling openings on the staff next year. With this budget approved tonight, we will be extending contracts to our current employees and to new candidates for open positions. We will have some additional hiring to do, including the most critical position of school principal, but the removal of the uncertainty surrounding the budget allows us to focus on the next year with more certainty."

There were 70 absentee ballots from the town clerk's office as of 3 a.m. Tuesday morning, down from 12 the number submitted in the last year. The last budget proposal budget had been able to do so after employee contracts teach-

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In Sports, 10  
 TWINFIELD GIRLS DROP IN STANDINGS

In Towns, 2  
 LAKEMYR STUDENTS CREATE MURAL

In Arts, 6  
 KOVALS PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW