

Fifth Annual Floyd Fleaflicker Event to Spay/Neuter Cats

by Michael Bielowski

HARDWICK — The fifth annual dinner to benefit the Floyd Fleaflicker Feline Fund will take place this Saturday at the American Legion at 9 p.m. The fund supports efforts to stray and enter stray, feral and "low income" cats. The event is dubbed "Fleaflicker-zoo."

The event is run by Theresa Howard of Hardwick, who organizes the fundraiser every year. The event is named after Floyd, a cat of above-average size, who will make an appearance at the fundraising dinner.

Hardwick Veterinary Clinic performs the spay and neuter procedures. Howard said Dr. Andrea Gilbert has always been very supportive.

"She has always herself," she said. "She helps us in any way she can."

Howard said the event will raise funds to benefit low-income families with cats. She said some people are on what's called the Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program, which involves a co-pay to treat cats, but proceeds from the event will help cover that, as well.

Howard said having fewer cats is better for animals and the community alike.

"I'm sure about the diseased animal around town, with the feline AIDS and feline leukemia," she said. "It's a very real thing and we're trying to bring awareness to the last cats there are, the last cats that will catch it."

In the last four years, her organiza-



Floyd Fleaflicker, an eleven-year-old Maine Coon cat, weighs 22 pounds. It is the mascot for the annual fundraiser that benefits a spay/neuter program for feral cats in the Hardwick area. The event has raised \$150,000 over four years and has benefited over 700 cats.

tion has raised over \$16,000 and spayed/neutered over 200 cats. Howard said that while they don't have official numbers, the area has far fewer cats than in the past.

"If you think about their breeding cycle, that's thousands of cats," she said.

In addition to Floyd, Sam, a former stray who once lived under the green 1874 building on Main Street, is an important part of the effort's history. Howard took the cat to the clinic with some money collected by friends and they ended up with \$40 remaining. Sam was checked. That \$40 ended up being the seed that started the Fleaflicker effort.

Howard continues to help local cats in dire situations. Recently, she took in two four-week-old kittens that were hospitalized and had fleas and helped nurse them back to health.

Regarding Saturday's event, Howard said in past years they've raised at least \$4,000 a year and she hopes to get over that mark this year. The event is an all-you-can-eat dinner and included an auction under 10 and five for those under 5. Raffle tickets for prizes will be available through the evening.

The event usually draws 110 to 120 attendees. For this year's event, the menu will include spaghetti with meat sauce and beef steaks, Swedish meatballs, and Swedish meatballs and beef steaks. Friends and neighbors cooked up 647 mealtable meals in preparation for the feast.



Alexandra Davis, Regional Administrator of Fish One — New England Environmental Protection and Enforcement, is seen with the town's commitment toward improvements in water quality, the watershed and the treatment of wastewater and storm water. At left is Julia Moore, Secretary of Alder, Nature and Wildlife, and at right is Emily Bowdoin, Coordinator of the Department of Environmental Cooperation.

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There was no update on the net-meeting solar project proposed by Nova Energy Development (NED) a month ago. HEED, Sullivan and NED's Alex Bravakis were each not able to attend the meeting.

HEED plans to upgrade infrastructure in the Hardwick Village and Madville Pond area, removing the old 2,400-volt transformers and replacing them with new, high-capacity systems.

"This is going to really reduce our line losses — over 86 percent," she said. "With these old systems, you're losing 30%."

Town Gets Praise From State Over Water Management Efforts

by Michael Bielowski

HARDWICK — While the rest of the state and local communities are vying with state agencies over the cost and feasibility of best practices regarding water system and runoff

management, Hardwick has gotten nothing but praise from the state's top regulatory voices.

"It's so impressive to hear the commitment to the watershed, water quality, and infrastructure in a small town," Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 1 Administrator Alex Dunn said. "And the knowledge and expertise that you are all bringing to this is just incredible."

"I have sat through meetings at very large cities where they seemed much less interested and informed than you in terms of what you are doing and what you are doing."

She was among several top state officials on environmental and water runoff matters who came to visit the Memorial Building on Monday morning and tour the town to see its water systems.

The state's 2015 Clean Water Act requires that the town make efforts to keep phosphorus and other harmful materials out of waterways and Lake Champlain.

Over the years, the town has upgraded various hardware and structures in its wastewater treatment plant, built an additional reservoir, and maintained two wells. Hardwick Town also maintains 75 miles of roads, including 55 miles of dirt road and 20 miles of paved roads, as well as culverts and ditches.

Town manager Jim Sweet said Hardwick has a town plan which integrates water management strategies to identify critical water quality issues and determine what changes need to happen.

He was quick to point out that not only has the town been able to

See PRAISE, 4

Hardwick Electric Solar Project Update at Select Board Meeting

by Michael Bielowski

HARDWICK — At last week's select board meeting, Hardwick Electric Board member Gina Campbell said she updated on the town's anticipated solar project planned for the gravel pit at the end of Billings Road.

The 1.3-megawatt project, dubbed "HEED" for the 11 workers at the Electric Department (HEED) services, has been on the back burner for most of last year, as HEED didn't get the price it wanted during its initial bidding process. Now, the

price has come down.

"We've continued working on the H11 project and we've received a proposal that Mike (HEED manager) Mike Sullivan is really excited about," Campbell said. "The cost in the industry has really come down and looking at the cost for that power project, it would be about 9 cents a kilowatt hour, which is reasonable enough."

Campbell said the gravel pit is an ideal location, because it is already considered a disturbed site by the state and it has favorable sun exposure.

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See SOLAR, 3

WNESU Partners With School Safety Agency to Offer Training

by Doug McClure

CABOT — In a press release, Washington Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU) said it and the ALICE Training Institute are bringing ALICE Training Instructor Certification to Cabot on July 20 and 27.

This two-day instructor course is designed to teach proactive nurseries and teachers how to identify and design to address individual students who are at risk of shooter incidents. The ALICE program is designed to provide individuals with survival skills and options for how to act in moments in the gap between when a violent situation begins and law enforcement arrives.

on scene," reads the release. "ALICE stands for Alert, Lock, Down, Inform, Counter and Evacuate, and is a training program which teaches the release says: "In line with recommendations" of multiple federal, state, and local authorities; none of those authorities have, however, endorsed it.

"Completing the ALICE Training Instructor Certification course provides individuals with certification in ALICE and allows them the opportunity to bring the strategies back to their places of work. Additionally, registrants will gain access to exclusive ALICE resources," the release says.

The training is controversial, be-

cause there is no evidence to support its effectiveness. Some critics say the training makes potentially dangerous assumptions about the shooter or shooters. During the most controversy is one form of the training that teaches students to distract the shooter by throwing objects. There are several reports of injuries of the training course insurance problems.

In an e-mail, WNESU Superintendent Mark Tucker said "Teaching the students to 'distract a shooter' is one of several possible techniques that we might teach our students to do. The point of this workshop is to give the teachers

See TRAINING, 4



Thirty people of diverse ages gathered in Craftsbury Village Square to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Vermont State Seal. The Vermont State Seal is shown in the foreground. From left to right are: Hild Thompson, Kevin Caporale, Jesse Ilerio, Carol Fairbank, Les Samuels, Brad Finn, Tony Young, Steve Livingston, and Arlene Fritz.

Teachers, Support Staff Sign Agreement With School Boards

by Will Waters

PLAINFIELD — Negotiations between the teachers and support staff of Plainfield Union School and Cabot School, which led to an agreement with the Washington Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU) have ended, and an agreement came into effect after ratification by union members and the WNESU board.

The twenty-one months of negotiations were interrupted only once by a dispute on negotiating positions in an open session, which the supervisory union negotiators felt was required by the state open meeting law, but was contested by the teachers' representatives who wanted negotiations in executive session, excluding the public.

Under work practices complaints were filed by both sides and heard by the state Labor-Relations Board, which ruled the open meeting law did not apply. The Vermont Supreme Court did not get involved in the dispute. Through a layoff method developed by the attorneys for WNESU, negotiations continued while the

photo by Jim Finn

By Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At least one citizen expressed concern about Police Chief Aaron Cochran appearing in uniform as a representative of Vermont Law Enforcement Against Gun Control (VLEAGC), holding his participation in uniform indicated an official low endorsement of that organization's pro-gun positions.

At the April 5 select board meeting, an attendee who spoke in support of Chief Cochran's participation in the VLEAGC news conference in Montpelier stated that he had heard that "some letters" had been sent to the select board expressing concerns about the Chief's participation in the event. The Gazette ob-

stacles were delineated.

A mediator was engaged to review the proposals by the supervisory union and its teachers' representatives and issue a decision, which led to an agreement.

The support staff agreement came on December 20, 2017, and was implemented in late January, following ratification by the associations and school boards.

The teachers' agreement came on March 8, with final ratification on March 26.

Both agreements cover the period of July 1, 2017–June 30, 2019, and the support staff agreement was being worked under interim letters of understanding that expired on June 30, 2017. Both of the agreements are retroactive to July 1, 2017.

Contrast language in the support staff agreement, which covers unionized school staff including paraprofessionals, bus drivers, custodial staff, food service workers, and other administrative staff, was basically unchanged, except for new salary and health care provisions. See AGREEMENT, 4

Causes and Costs of Childhood Trauma Analyzed at Meeting

by June Pichel Cook

GREENSBORO — Attempts to answer questions about childhood trauma and the consequential academic costs to schools were discussed in a recent report by Elementary School Principal Erica Erwin. Her findings were aired at the Lakewick Union Elementary School Board's recent meeting.

The report came at the request of the board to see if such costs could be separated out of the school budget. It was funded by the vast differences in feeling Vermont legislators may not fully understand school budget issues because of studying child-

hood trauma that go well beyond academics. The costs to the healthcare systems have been tracked, but the costs and impacts on schools have not.

The report defines childhood trauma as a traumatic definition of childhood trauma is daunting. Erwin sees the range of costs interrelated with poverty, increased academic expectations, and untreated mental health needs because of barriers to access.

"The complications include the difficulty in defining trauma, the vast differences between states in how student behaviors and needs are addressed, and the tangled correlation be-

tween poor academic performance and psychosocial difficulties.

Chronic abuse and neglect are more readily identifiable, but educators are witness to a wide variety of familial and parenting behaviors and the range of what constitutes trauma can be starting," according to Erwin.

Erwin said as loss of a pet, family conflict, death of a parent or grandparent, divorce, emotional or sexual abuse are not easily discernible. Loose parental supervision, the use of a supervised screen time, can affect a child's academic performance. See TRAUMA, 7

hardwickgazette.com

In Sports, 10

MOOSE INDUCTED INTO SPORTS HALL OF FAME



In Towns, 2

WHITELIGHT FACTS AT CARE CENTER

In Arts, 6

WUNESSE MUSICAL COMEDY MAY 4



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