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Dr. Eric Richter, of Whitefield, NH., retired on August 1 after being in dentistry for 44 years. 42 of those years at the Hardwick Dental Group in Hardwick.

photo by Vanessa Kaunzner

New Chapter Begins for Dental Group

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – On the afternoon of Friday, August 2, a large crowd gathered to honor Dr. Eric Richter, who ran the Hardwick Dental Group since May 1978. He has retired and sold his practice to Michael and Katie Pint after over four decades of making sure the teeth of residents of Hardwick and surrounding areas were well looked after.

One guest there to thank Dr. Richter for his years of service was Rosie Derby. People know Dr. Richter, their parents knew him, to many cases even their grandparents, and his reputation grew as he took care of generations of Hardwickians. The crowd ranged from small children to senior citizens.

For his part, Dr. Richter said he is not exactly slowing down. He's retired to New Hampshire where he's busy on a restoration project and just got back from a camper trip across the country.

He was a young man of 28 when he first found his way to Hardwick. At that time, the Hardwick dental practice was a small office of a three dentist's office, and Dr. Richter was just a year out of college at the University of Pennsylvania. He'd been working in Massachusetts while casting a net about New England looking for a place to settle.

He found Hardwick. Today, with a laugh he said, "It was still a pretty rough town at the time. I figured the only place it could go was up." More earnestly, he said the town made an immediate impression of being one with good people where he could build a life, and a family. At the time, his youngest daughter had just turned two. His progenitalation of good things coming for Hardwick turned out to be right, he opened the business when the town was on the cusp of renaissance.

"It was and is a friendly town," he said. "I got to know everyone. Before I retired I was working on the grandkids of kids I'd worked on in the beginning." Reflecting on his years in the practice, Dr. Richter said a lot has changed, but the most important thing has not: the people.

"It's all gone digital now," he said. "I was the first one in the state to restorative dentistry to get into CADCAM [computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing] 28 years ago. And the work in the building has more split up. In the beginning, I didn't have that."

He said at the start his office had a hygienist, a dental assistant and a receptionist to schedule the patients. When he sold it, the business had three dentists, hygienists and dental assistants, two people in the front desk and an office manager. "I've always

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Vermont Cheeses Set New Record

MONTPELIER – A new record was set for Vermont cheese at Dairyteligion American Cheese Society's (ACS) 2019 Annual Awards competition in Richmond, Virginia. Vermont producers, big and small, collectively took home 44 ribbons, marking Vermont's best showing to date. Additionally, five Vermont cheeses were finalists for the Best of Show.

"Congratulations to Vermont Vermont's cheesemakers for this impressive achievement," said Governor Phil Scott. "Cheesemakers' commitment to excellence is helping Vermont grow its economy by creating jobs and further strengthening our great Vermont brand. We appreciate your work every day and now the national stage has experienced it too. Well done."

There were more 2,000 entries at the 2019 ACS, with 58 Vermont companies submitting cheeses to be judged. This annual competition is supported by the Vermont Cheese Council which provides technical assistance and marketing support for Vermont's cheesemakers.

"These awards reinforce Vermont's commitment to quality, which starts with the farmer, on the farm, and is carried right through until the cheese is served," said Agriculture Secretary Anson Tebbetts. "Many thanks to the cheesemakers and the Vermont Cheese Council for their hard work helping Vermont's economy grow by continuing to reinforce and grow the quality of Vermont products."

Winning Cheeses from individual producers include: Cabot Creamery Cooperative, Cabot: Cabot Farmhouse Private Stock, 1st Place; Cabot Cheesemaker's Select 2015 Extra Sharp Cheddar, 1st Place; Cabot Garlic & Herb (New York) 1st Place; Old School Cheddar, 2nd Place; McCadam Bros. Monster (New York), 2nd Place; Cabot Salted Butter, (Massachusetts), 3rd Place. Cabot Hill Orchard, Craftsbury Common: Surrender, 2nd Place. Jasper Hill Farm, Greensboro Corners: Aged Cheddar, 1st Place (in Category and Best of Show finalist, in collaboration with Cabot Creamery Cooperative); Alpha Tolman, 1st Place; Cabot Cheddar, 2nd Place (in collaboration with Cabot Creamery Cooperative); Bayley Hazen Blue, 3rd Place; Cellarhound, 2nd Place; Harbison, 2nd Place; Willoughby, 2nd Place; Little Hosmer, 2nd Place.

See the August 14 issue of the Gazette for an in depth interview with a local winner.)

Overlay at left is from an 1886 Sanborn map of Hardwick. The train tracks have a section that jogs out from the main tracks, a siding that allows trains to pass one another.

photographic by Doug McClure

Depot Train Tracks Likely to Remain

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – As the 18-mile Hardwick section of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) project notched the stretch by Cressman's Hill on state highway 16, VTrans does the planned work for much of the LVRT and typically takes up any existing train tracks to make way for the Trail. Hardwick learned the railroad tracks outside the Depot were planned for removal, which caught the Hardwick Historical Society (HHS) and town both off guard.

While VTrans' intent is to remove tracks that were once functional, the tracks outside the Depot were not original. These tracks were put down in the 1980s for demonstration and education purposes, just to show what the original ones would have looked like.

HHS President Elizabeth Dow said the Society had long owned the adjacent land, which is valuable "for anyone under 40" because those generations never experienced Gardner rail which helped give birth to Hardwick's granite boom. In the late 2010s, Dow said, one could still hop on a train to St. Johnsbury and take it all the way to Swanton.

"When kids see the tracks," Dow said at a meeting, "their reaction is 'wow' because it's not something they've ever seen."

The problem with their expensive rail service was it was privately run and losing money bad. By December after the last trains finished through town, many residents would like to have the option of getting on a train to go shopping or to the doctor in Morrisville or St. Johnsbury instead of waiting on a Ridesharing van. But in the economy of the time, the service was not viable any longer, and with the tracks gone, the fate of the Depot Group is the balance.

According to Dow, Hardwick acquired that building in 1980 with a vague idea that it might have some economic development potential, but no specifics, and by the late-80s and early-90s a restoration project was underway. The town owns the Depot building and half acre lot it sits on, but VTrans also has a say because of its right-of-way.

For decades none of the questions created by that overlap came up – until the rail trail started to come through town. VTrans assumed the tracks would be taken up as usual. Once that agency was notified of the significance of the tracks to the HHS, consideration was made about moving the planned for section of the railtrail a bit north and leaving those tracks where they were.

On August 1, after some back and forth, Hardwick Select Board Chair Eric Resnick said the subject of the tracks was going to end up in the board's hands. With that in mind, and with a consensus that a small move north would not cause significant expense or interruption, the board felt the prudent course of action was to verify those opinions.

The HHS and Dow had made a solid case for preserving the location of the tracks and point-of-fact the adjacent route of the LVRT would run along the original railroad line.

The HHS also just restored a section house, which is positioned adjacent to the tracks. (In the hayday of rail section houses – small structures for storage of tools and equipment – not every eight or so miles alongside train tracks. Dow said when interviewed at the completion of its restoration last fall. Out of the hundreds of

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John Dubois of Cabot kayaks on Caspian Lake recently in these waters.

photo by Vanessa Kaunzner

DEC Reports Stress on Lakes and Ponds

by Doug McClure

MONTPELIER – Newly updated data from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reflects concerning statistics about nearly every lake in our area. The DEC assessed 805 separate lakes ranks as "stressed." In terms of water quality standards, 805 of those lakes are classified as a "moderately disturbed" watershed; the largest, Caspian Lake, is considered "severely disturbed," and "highly disturbed," with one significant factor being phosphorous pollution. DEC Senior Caspian Lake phosphorous levels are "significantly increasing" during the spring and "highly significantly increasing" in the summer.

Like virtually every lake in Vermont, Caspian is also polluted with mercury. The DEC describes the mercury contamination as "ubiquitous in Vermont's soil waters" and cites the source of contamination as atmospheric.

The DEC's explanation of mercury says it comes from "the combustion of coal for energy production, and incineration of municipal and medical waste that produces the majority of Hg (mercury) deposited on to the watersheds of the mid-Appalachians, U.S. and Eastern Canada."

Elevated mercury in lakes affects fish, loons and therefore the food safety. The DEC stated "The Health Department recommends that people limit eating some

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Hardwick Commission Releases Draft Town Plan

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – As required by statute, the Hardwick Planning Commission has released a draft out of its 2019 Town Plan, which updates the 2014 Town Plan. For Hardwick Plan, the Schoolcraft's solution revisited in 2014 objectives and found many still ongoing, with some notable exceptions and significant progress. Here's expectations from five years ago.

A new element not even on the radar five years ago is the Yellow Barn Business Accelerator. In 2014, the Food Venture Center was relatively new and was the focus of growing an agricultural economy by amplify Hardwick's earlier successes in that sector.

"The success of the Vermont Food Venture Center," reads the 2019 Plan, "created a need for expanded infrastructure ... to grow agriculture ... and to attract visitors who can appreciate local food environment. The Hardwick Yellow Barn Business Accelerator ... is designed to meet that need."

Where the Yellow Barn Accelerator is not even under consideration in 2014, it now has a significant role in the town's business development. The 2014 plan stated that "Hardwick does not have a strategic economic development plan" and "We have, so far, avoided the fate of becoming another bedroom community." The plan noted that "We have a revolving loan fund with approximately $243,018 in loans currently outstanding with

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Local Teen Shares Story of Long Trail Triumph

by Michael Rislowski

WOODBURY – Sarah Rothmeyer, a local teen from Wood Valley shared an inspirational story at the Woodbury Community Library last week on how he completed Vermont's famous 272-mile Long Trail in just 18 days last year.

Just ago 16 at the time, he was inspired by his late older brother Greg Rothmeyer who had also completed the trail during his senior year. He died killed in a car accident in 2007 at just 21 years old. Sarah Rothmeyer said he would also complete the journey, and he would do it alone.

"It was a very large hill some on me to choose to do the trail finally," he said. "... He was definitely there with me."

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Zach Rothmeyer of Woodbury completed the 272-mile Long Trail in 18 days in 2018. He made a presentation about his trip at the Woodbury Library.

courtesy photo

Kelly Robinson Receives Fulbright Award

Kelly Robinson

by Jackie Page

HARDWICK – The U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board announced that Kelly Robinson of Hazen Union School in Hardwick Plan, has been offered a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program grant. She is one of approximately 76 U.S. citizens who will travel abroad through the Fulbright Program in 2019-2020.

Robinson grew up in Morgan Center, Canada. She attended UVM high school then Lyndon State College, where she received a degree in communications in 1999 and a degree in English secondary education in 1997. She attended the Middlebury Language Schools in Middlebury graduating with a master's degree in literature in 2003.

Robinson became a teacher at St. Johnsbury Academy, then at North Burlington High School. In 2015, she achieved National Board Certification, the highest level of professional achievement a teacher can reach. In 2012, she began teaching junior and senior English classes at Hazen, then communications two years ago to teach seventh grade.

Robinson explained, "I'll never forget a year ago" when I learned that English, social studies and other humanities are very important for teaching these students."

After reading the book "A Long Walk to Water" in 2016, Robinson's seventh graders organized their own 10-mile long walk from school to Caspian Lake to raise money for clean, safe water for

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