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Hardwick Spring Festival Celebration Suspended

by Tyler Moulter

HARDWICK — Spring is typically recognized as a time of warm weather, green lawns, blossoming flowers, and time spent outdoors in the community. The annual event meant to celebrate the season will miss its 2020 appearance, as COVID-19 continues to leave in question when Vermont towns will be with community gatherings.

The Hardwick Kiwanis Club, which plays a pivotal role in organizing the town's spring festival, announced last week that the event has been canceled this year. It is the first time since the event's inception in 1950 that the town will not gather along the streets to view the parade, flock to Atkins Field for the array of amusement activities, or chat with neighbors while enjoying the food and wares offered by many vendors.

John Bellavance, treasurer for the Kiwanis Club, said the organization had been using local and state guidance to come to the decision that put the Memorial Day weekend event on hold.

"We've been working with the town manager's office, because even though Kiwanis sponsors the parade and the activities down to Atkins Field, the town of Hardwick also does the fireworks and other activities," Bellavance said.

Warmer weather is quickly drawing people outside even as the governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order remains in place. The order allows for local outdoor exercise for people who are not sick. The order expires on May 15, but specific guid-



photo courtesy Hardwick Historical Society
Rainy Tulip Festival parade in 1954. The buildings are Rippon Buildings, 1906-1917, Gazette Building, 1860, Eaton Block/Hill Building, 1800s - 1964.



photo courtesy Hardwick Historical Society
1958 Tulip Festival parade dignitaries were Mr. and Mrs. H.J. Kretschmar of the Netherlands Embassy in Washington DC., unknown, Congressman Winston Proby, from Newport, unknown, Helen (Mrs. Sawyer) Lee, unknown, Sawyer Lee. Taken at the Lee home on Mill Street. More Tulip Festival photos on Page 6.

ance on how people recreate and gather for events after that time has yet to be released, pending reviews of how Vermont's COVID-19 case numbers respond to people returning to work and certain businesses re-open-

ing. State officials expect, however, pandemic-based norms as physical distancing and cloth masks to remain for some time. Bellavance hopes that, with time, people will be able to get out to some communi-

ty-based gatherings, such as the Fourth of July activities in neighboring towns. He said Kiwanis leaders will continue to work with the town to seek state guidance with the prospect of bringing some sort of celebration to Hardwick later in the summer or the early fall.

"Basically, we would love to have some activities that would be allowed with safe practices," he said. Lorraine Hussey of the Hardwick Historical Society said Hardwick's Spring Festival started as the Tulip Festival in 1950 before its name was changed in 1964. To her knowledge, more routine inconveniences such as rainy parades and even snowflakes falling have not canceled festivities in the history of the 70-year event.

In the fall of 1949, the Kiwanis Club, under the direction of Sawyer Lee, played a pivotal role in planting tulips throughout the community in anticipation of them blossoming in time for a spring celebration the following year. Hussey said it wasn't long before many other community members and organizations were helping to prepare garden spaces for the annual event.

Other notable activities the festival has presented over the years include crowning a Tulip Festival Queen, a craft fair originally held in the upstairs space of the Memorial Building, and cubmobile races.

Bellavance encouraged people to keep abreast of local and state advice, wear protective equipment when necessary, and to preserve the possibility of a later celebration.



courtesy photo
Seventh-graders Haeden Lumsden (left) and Matthew Langdell (right) donated their own money toward clean water for South Sudan. Teacher Kelly Robinson (center) said the sign represents Shelby Thompson, who also donated "but was too shy to be in the picture."

Hazen Teacher Wins Vermont NEA Award

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Hazen Union teacher Kelly Robinson has been presented with the Vermont National Education Association's (NEA) Angelo J. Dorta Award for Teaching Excellence, which "celebrates teaching excellence, public education, and our dedicated school workforce." As the award winner, she will represent Vermont in the national competition for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.

Robinson was the first Orange Southwest Supervisor Union teacher to receive National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. Robinson said the "absolutely grueling" process took three years "but it's a national board certification, so it should be a grueling process... (and was) probably the biggest game-changer for me in my profession."

The Dorta award focuses on attention to diversity. Robinson this year brought in a survivor of Nazi Germany as a passenger on the M.S. St. Louis, the ocean liner that carried Jewish refugees from Germany in 1939. For the past two years, Robinson's students walked from Hazen to Caspian Lake, raising awareness and over \$3,000 in funding for South Sudan villages needing clean water.

Robinson said, "I try to create assignments that connect my students' lives to the lives of people in cultures that are different from ours. The health of our democracy and of our planet depends on these connections and understanding."

In 2018, she earned a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Scholarship, described by the State Department as "a program aimed at globalizing U.S. classrooms." Robinson said that opened doors across the country and translated to opportunities for her students. She recalled a student assignment to write refugees' biographies. To give the students

a more thorough learning experience, Robinson tapped into the Fulbright network and found refugees willing to speak through Facebook. "The students had this really great opportunity for a primary resource. One of the (refugees) was a professional soccer player in England from Syria. Both of the boys who were interviewing him are soccer players. The sparks just flew. (The students) took off with this interview and it was like they had known this man from Syria for a long time. It really put a personal face on refugees and helped my kids bust through stereotypes of people from other countries and refugees."

The Fulbright scholarship also comes with a graduate course and an international field experience. Robinson said she was given three choices of where to go and was excited to learn that she received her first choice: sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Senegal. It was a "wild coincidence" that Hazen senior Elijah Lew-Smith was also studying in Senegal. The two planned to connect while she was there. Robinson said she threw herself into the opportunity and started learning Wolof, Senegal's most widely spoken native language. Because of the pandemic shutdown, however, studying in Africa is on hold for now.

Another focus of the Dorta Award is professional development. Robinson said "Teaching is learning, and to teach is to learn twice. As an educator, if you are no longer learning and practicing your teaching craft, it might be time to step back and re-evaluate. My students are why I keep pushing myself." In her roughly twenty years as a teacher, with the last seven at Hazen, Robinson said she has always sought out high-caliber professional development opportunities to improve her practice and to support student success. "Teaching is a multi-faceted, challenging profes-

sion, and oftentimes overwhelming. Professional development helps keep me grounded and engaged in my profession." She said she particularly appreciates Hazen's "great current leadership" for supporting her professionally and making her feel that what she does matters.

Robinson is considering a new professional development opportunity with "Bal-A-Via-X" training. That program is a series of balance, auditory and vision exercises that is deeply rooted in rhythm. The goal is to reach children suffering from trauma. She explained part of the program involves "taking raquetballs and bouncing them in a rhythmic pattern of various levels of sophistication. The rhythmic exercises activate both sides of the brain and are helpful to students who struggle with focusing, have a visual tracking deficiency, or auditory imbalances - it is often done in concert with other students, and that helps to build community, as well. We have a lot of children who come to school whose brains are simply not ready to learn because of what's going on in their lives outside of school." She said she hopes the program will help those students better regulate and focus so other learning can happen.

Robinson said she hopes her work has made a difference in students' lives. "I love my profession. I love teaching, and I really think that Hazen has made a difference in students' lives. That's something my students wonder about, as to what impact we are making." Because of the pandemic, Robinson said she has a great capacity to fly on faith. You go in, you do your best every day, you help out these kids, you support them, you love them, and you hope for the best, because we don't often hear feedback that we've helped them."

Cabot School to Raise Pride, BLM Flags

by Doug McClure

CABOT — At the Monday, April 27, meeting of the Cabot School Board, the board unanimously approved a student-led resolution to raise both a Pride flag and a Black Lives Matter (BLM) flag in front of the Cabot School.

The resolution begins "The Cabot School, its students, faculty staff, and board of directors, recognize the inherent value, worth and dignity of all individuals - irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender orientation, gender identity, disability, vocation, veteran status, income status, or family status."

The flag-raising is slated to be a publicized event that is planned for "at some point in the future when public health considerations allow for it," according to board member Rory Thibault. A live-streamed alternative event is under consideration if COVID-19 restrictions push the "formal ceremony" into the summer.

Thibault said that "this flag was initiated by students [and] the educational and community discussions were student-led." He said he crafted the language "with input from other members and consideration of how Montpelier structured their

resolution several years ago." He was referring to the BLM flag, which flies at other schools in Vermont including Rutland, Burlington, and Montpelier High Schools and Edmunds Middle School in Burlington. The Pride flag is not being flown at any school in Vermont, according to student researcher, Thibault said, and Cabot School would therefore likely be the first.

The resolution continues by describing diversity and inclusivity as "integral to the educational mission of Cabot School" that is "fundamental to the school's values and commitment to educating future leaders. The Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) community historically and presently face discrimination and a lack of equality."

It goes on to say that "separate but equal" is no longer the law of the land, but systemic inequity in education, housing, employment, and the justice system has served to and continues to disadvantage communities of color and the LGBTQ population."

The resolution "recognizes that raising the Black Lives Matter and Rainbow Pride flags has the potential to be a divisive matter within the Town of Cabot." Specifically, the resolution addresses "the [BLM] movement's actual or perceived degree of hostility



photo courtesy Facebook
The Stars and Stripes, Black Lives Matter and rainbow Pride flags will fly together on the Cabot School flagpole.

toward law enforcement" and "strongly rejects [such hostility]" and "any connections to violence or hate."

"We believe our students are not motivated by hostility toward others, rather, only by a desire for respect for all."

Addressing another potentially divisive issue, the resolution reads "we recognize that symbols, including flags, may have different meanings to different people, but here,

the values to be promoted by flying of these flags are the antithesis of hatred, violence or division."

Thibault said "The efforts of our students demonstrate that tolerance, respect, and a desire for social justice are not concepts unique to more urban or diverse communities, rather, inclusivity, empathy, and a desire for equity are core values that make small communities like Cabot welcoming for all."