

QUECHEE

Bring back a festival feeling



VALLEY NEWS — JENNIFER HAUCK PHOTOS

Larissa Gajdos-Meuse, 7, of Quechee, looks back at her father, Matt Meuse, when doing the obstacle course at the Upper Valley Waldorf School in Quechee on Saturday during the school's Maple Fest celebration.

Outdoor maple sugaring event replaces pre-pandemic tradition at school

By RAY COUTURE
Valley News Correspondent

QUECHEE — In a warmly-lit downstairs room in the Upper Valley Waldorf School's Roberts House, three early-education teachers dance and twirl marionette puppets on a cloth mini-stage to the awe and delight of a pack of small children and their parents.

Another educator sits off to the side and regales this murmuring and excited audience with the narration of the

Matt Swett, of Norwich, gathers maple cotton candy during Maple Fest on Saturday. Swett tested the recipe for the cotton candy with students at the school to find the right balance of flavor and sweetness.

performance, an adapted retelling of the Russian folk story "Masha and the Bear," in-which the title character, a young girl, outwits a clingy bruin by hiding in a basket of

SEE MAPLE A3



VERMONT STATEHOUSE

House OK bill on sports gambling

Expected to be a modest source of new revenue

By SHAUN ROBINSON
VTDigger

The state House of Representatives on Friday passed a widely-anticipated bill that would legalize online sports betting in the state — and set aside some of the revenue to mitigate the sharp rise in problem gambling that officials expect would follow suit.

Lawmakers agreed to a series of amendments to the bill, H.127, late Thursday evening and gave it final approval on Friday. The bill passed nearly unanimously. Under the amended bill, Vermont would take at least 20% of the adjusted gross revenue that sports betting operators — such as DraftKings and FanDuel — make in the state each year.

The state also would charge each company an annual operating fee that varies based on how many other companies are in the market here. If Vermont contracts with one operator, it would charge \$550,000. But if there are six — the maximum allowed under the bill — each one would pay \$125,000.

Vermont lawmakers have long known based on data from states where online sports betting is already legal that the practice would be a modest source of new revenue. Gov. Phil Scott's proposed 2024 fiscal year budget estimated that the state would bring in \$2.6 million. But the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Office estimated this week that — after tweaks to the bill in the House money committees — the state could ex-

SEE GAMBLING A6

Seniors aging in place risk losing care unless NH steps up

By ANNMARIE TIMMINS
New Hampshire Bulletin

Instead of living in nursing facilities, nearly 3,800 Granite Staters are in their own homes and communities thanks to the help they receive with basic needs like bathing, transferring from a wheelchair to bed, managing medications, making meals, and getting to medical appointments.

Approximately 600 of them risk

MEDICAID

losing that care in July if the state doesn't increase what it's paying providers through the Medicaid-funded Choices for Independence (CFI) program, which covers the cost of housekeeping and personal care services for people who want to age at home and qualify for Medicaid.

The heads of Ascentria Care Alliance and Waypoint of New Hamp-

shire, who have 600 CFI clients between them, said they will leave the program in July if lawmakers do not increase their Medicaid payments. They said they've stayed in the program this long only by fundraising to cover their losses.

It's still early in state budget negotiations, but their rate requests far exceed the 3.1 percent increase Gov. Chris Sununu has proposed in his two-year budget. Their departure would leave their clients few

options; the state has a massive shortage of direct care workers, and long-term care nursing facilities are full.

"It's turned into, we used to subsidize (the care) somewhat, to now, it's going to break the organization if it continues at this rate," said Angela Bovill, president and CEO of Ascentria. "It's not that we don't care. We haven't stopped caring or we wouldn't have been subsidizing it

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"It's turned into, we used to subsidize (the care) somewhat, to now, it's going to break the organization if it continues at this rate."

ANGELA BOVILL, president of Ascentria

VERMONT

Animal rescue community mourns fire victim

By SHAUN ROBINSON
VTDigger

She met Sarah Berger in, perhaps, the most fitting way possible: While rescuing a cat.

The small, gray shorthair was stuck up in a tree at Berger's house in Winooski, Vt. Berger called a local animal rescue and advocacy organization, where Kathree Ludwig had just started volunteering. Ludwig borrowed a ladder from a neighbor to reach the cat, and "we were friends from that moment on," she recalled in an interview last week.

Sarah Berger went out of her way to care for feral, farm cats

In countless other cases, though, it was Berger rescuing the cats herself. She didn't do it for a living — there was no money in it, anyway — but saving cats was, in many ways, her life's work, Ludwig and other friends said. Berger later moved north to Richford, Vt., and would go on to care for as many as hundreds of farm cats throughout Franklin County.

Berger, 68, died earlier this month in a fire that razed her home and likely killed

the 10 cats that lived with her. Her death has left others who look after farm cats in the region wondering what they'll do without her.

"Just the thought of her being gone is really tragic for Franklin County, because I would get calls all the time for her," Ludwig said. "She was just so active in the community."

Berger would drive miles and miles a day to make sure several feral cat colonies in the region had food and warm shelter, friends said. She also worked

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COURTESY TOWN MEETING TV

Sarah Berger died in an fire earlier this month.

INSIDE



SPORTS

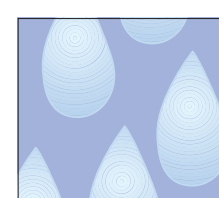
VICTORIOUS AT LAST

Dartmouth men's lacrosse won its Ivy League opener against Harvard to snap a league-record, 34-game losing streak in improbable fashion. **Page B1**

WORLD & NATION

UNREST GRIPS ISRAEL

Tens of thousands of Israelis poured into the streets of cities across the country Sunday in a spontaneous outburst of anger after Prime Minister Netanyahu abruptly fired his defense minister. **Page A5**



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AFTERNOON SHOWERS

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