



WINDHAM NEWS & NOTES

Volume VII- Issue 3

November/December 2009



HAPPY HOLIDAYS



School Meeting Results: A Community Conversation

by Carolyn Partridge

On Tuesday, Oct. 20, the Windham School Board hosted a "Community Conversation" at the Windham Elementary School. The purpose was to present some information and hear from community members on 2 different questions: How do you envision our town and school 5, 10, 20 years from now and what should be our guiding principles for planning for the future? It was very gratifying to have more than 60 people attend the meeting.

A presentation was given by Frank Rucker, CFO Windham Central Supervisory Union, on 3 different scenarios: Going forward with the school as is, closing our school and tuitioning all of our students out to other schools, or implementing a joint board model with another school similar to what Brookline and Newfane are doing. The closing the school and tuitioning scenario was not recommended by Frank because, while the tax rate would be favorable with the current numbers of students we have, the tax rate would increase significantly with just a couple more students and, once closed, the school could not reopen as it currently exists.

We then moved on to the "community conversation", which was facilitated by Guilford resident, Don McLean. Many people expressed support for the school and the quality of the education offered there. Some expressed concern about the cost and our ability to afford keeping the school open, as well as the quality of education that could be delivered in a school Windham's size.

There was a question about the small schools grant, which is part of the revenue received by the Windham School that comes from the state. In an attempt to clarify this, Windham already sends more to the Education Fund than it uses, so we are already paying for that grant money, which is returned to us. The governor has proposed that the Teachers' Retirement Fund, now the responsibility of the General Fund, be shifted to the Education Fund. This was not the original purpose of the Education Fund and if it were implemented, property taxes would rise.

The School Board appreciates all of the input from our community members – the dialogue was lively at times and helpful as we move forward in planning for the future

ANNUAL HARVEST SUPPER

November 7, 2009—5 PM—Windham Meeting House

Won't you join us for the annual Harvest Fest sponsored by the Windham Community Organization? Ham, scalloped potatoes (yum,yum), green salad, baked beans, butternut squash, sweet rolls and assorted pies will be served for your eating pleasure. \$10/adult, \$5/child and \$25/family.

Thank you for your continued support.

Select Board News

We are all enjoying the resurfaced sections of Windham Hill and White Road. Reimbursement of 80 % of the cost has been received from the State. The work will be complete when the white lines are painted at the edges. Over the summer the road crew has repaired a number of culverts and ditched areas where needed. We are headed into a winter season with a healthy balance in the road budget due to a decrease in fuel and materials costs.

A smooth surface has led to increased speeding, especially on our paved roads and more truck traffic using Windham Hill Road to cut between Rtes. 11 and 30. More signs have been posted noting the limit of 40 mph throughout Windham and South Windham and 20 mph in the school district. For your safety we have contracted with the Sheriff's Department to monitor these speed limits for four hours a month at random times. Please be aware of your speed especially as you roll down the hills. Stay alert for walkers, animals and that off-chance there might be a sheriff's car around the next bend.

The work on the Coolidge Connector continues; and now that the area is cleared for new power lines, the huge towers that hold the lines will be trucked in. During this time overweight truck traffic will be unusually heavy. We reminded those of you who are curious and also who regularly walk near the lines that this is considered a construction area and can be dangerous. You should not take vehicles up there and please use great caution if you are walking. VELCO has requested we remind everyone to keep a distance until work is complete and be aware of large trucks especially in the area of Wheeler Road.

We have received notice from FEMA that our application for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program has been granted. Anyone wanting or needing flood insurance can now obtain it.

Along with our auditors and treasurer we are continuing our attempts to streamline both the Articles voted on at Town Meeting and the budget reporting process. To keep costs down we have done a considerable amount of this work under the direction of Bill Hall of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. He is guiding us through the process of standardizing our accounting systems both to make the reporting more user friendly and prepare us for an audit sometime in the future. Special thanks are due to Treasurers: Carol Merritt and Ernie Friedli and Auditors: Gina Noel, Imme Maurath and Ginny Crittenden for all their time, efforts and ideas.

We finally have closure on a lawsuit in which we have been a joint plaintiff. The old Hamm Talc Mine has been flooding on to White Road since 2003. Please see Edith Serke's article on Page 3 for more information.

Also in this issue of the News and Notes is an article regarding work being done at the Meeting House to install a handicap lift. We are taking this opportunity to remove the stage, which takes up a large amount of space and is high enough that if someone should fall off they could be seriously hurt.

Our days are shorter and there is no denying winter is coming. Drive safely, stay warm and enjoy turning your attention to inside projects.

The Select Board

Mary Boyer, Margaret Dwyer and Walter Woodruff

Talc Mine Property on White Road Still Subject to Act 250

By Edith Serke

A long standing legal suit that Windham has been a party to has recently been heard by the Vermont Supreme Court. According to the Rutland Herald, the "abandoned talc mine that filled with water and flooded a nearby property and ditching on White Road is still subject to Act 250, even though a land use permit a Ludlow mining company once held for the site expired when operations ended years ago."

The former Hamm Mine, once operated by Luzenac American Inc., formed a large pond and a wetland and flooded an adjoining property. According to the Rutland Herald, when talc mining on the 84 acre site ended in 1997, the open pit mine filled with water and formed a nine-acre pond over it. In 2003, water started overflowing on the northeast corner of the mine property along the town road and onto a 200-acre property owned by James McCandless. "After that", the article continues, "the pond's level rose gradually, 20 feet a year during the five prior years, the high court said..."

The current owners of the mine site, Sean and Elizabeth Reese, have reached agreement for controlling water flow from the mine in a separate action. "According to Bob Fisher, Windham town attorney, it looks as though we are closer to an agreement for the building of a permanent structure or dam that will control the outflow of the Hamm Mine,"

Court records indicate that the Reeses bought the property from Luzenac in 2002, apparently not knowing about the drainage issues, the Herald said.

Movement Towards The Windham Resource Directory

By Heath Boyer

We reported in the last issue that the idea for a Guide to Windham Resources had stimulated some enthusiastic responses. Since that story there have been a number of other developments. Some of the submissions made for the Directory also led to further ideas about what the final product should contain and what it should look like.

One town resident, with significant expertise in computers and website management, was prompted by the story to volunteer his services to design and administer a website for the Town of Windham. This idea is currently under study and development with a small ad hoc team of volunteers.

Publication of the Resource Directory will be delayed until the next issue of the News & Notes in the hopes of getting it right the first time.



WINDHAM NEWS & NOTES

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Send donations to address
below

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to all who provided articles. Their names are noted with their submissions

Send articles of around 300 words to the address below. We prefer emailed submissions to windhamnews@hotmail.com

Next deadline

December 11, 2009

Windham News & Notes

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Ann Garrett Won't Curb Her Enthusiasm

by Mary McCoy



Potholders shaped like bunnies hang in Ann Garrett's kitchen, and she calls her home on Route 121 "Bunny Hollow". If you'd guess she has a fondness for rabbits, you'd be wrong. When she first came to the U.S., most spouses called each other "Honey." She says, "Honey is sticky and always sweet, and that's not me. So my husband changed it to 'Bunny'."

While it's true there's nothing gooey or clinging about this woman, her generous spirit can be called sweet. Her good friend, Lydia Pope France, says, "Ann is someone who truly puts herself out for others, to the point that you have to be careful what you say to her, as there is no stopping her when she is on a mission to help others." Yet Ann is sweet like one of the surprising pastries she bakes and nothing like an ever-sugary twinkie. This self-described free spirit is too independent to be predictable.

Ann met Nicolas Garrett, her husband of 40 years, while hitchhiking in 1968 in her native Sweden. Nicolas, who is from Greece and was in Sweden on business, gave her a ride. A short time later, they happened to meet again at a party. Ann found him to be "quite an interesting fellow." Although she was a hip student, and he was much older and established, one thing led to another.

Nicholas' career in the shipping and oil industry required that he travel a lot, which suited Ann. "I love being alone," she says, "and it's what I'm used to in our marriage." Ann also traveled with Nicolas all over the world, and they moved frequently, which kept her from having a career of her own, although she's had a variety of jobs. While they lived in Connecticut, they rented houses in Vermont where Ann skied and they entertained Nicolas' clients. Ann loved Vermont, and in early 1991 she set out to find a place to rent year-round. She saw a house in Windham that was for sale yet affordable due to its run-down state. "As soon as I walked in, I was home," she says. Nicolas was not so keen on the idea, mainly because of the condition of the house, but eventually he agreed.

That summer she lived there without plumbing or a kitchen, describing the time as "one of the best of my life." After wandering for years, she set down roots and hired workmen to transform the place. When Nicolas took a consulting job in England and she spent a lot of time there with him, she wished she were here. "I love Vermont people, the seasons, the natural beauty, and our Bunny Hollow," Ann says. "Now Nicolas is retired, and I'm here full-time, which is the perfect life for me."

Ann fills her days with tasks she loves – yard work, home renovation, wood working, and various crafts, including rug hooking, knitting, needle felting, and quilting. Until this year, she split their wood, and she still enjoys hauling it into the house. She loves to bake and cook, even doing so on occasion for the Landgrove Inn where she works part-time in the office.

Yet Ann says what she likes most is people. She likes the old timers who dominated Windham when she first came here and are often delightfully cantankerous. She also likes the newcomers who have brought different ideas and have helped organize more community activities. About all Windham folks she says, "People care for each other here, like family would. I know people will help if needed." (continued next page)

Ann Garrett (continued from previous page)

Ann experienced this first hand after August 3, 2003, when she heard a loud rumble above the sound of heavily falling rain. Outside, she saw a large brown wave rushing down Route 121, turning right onto her driveway, and flooding her property. When it receded later that day, her meadow was covered with rock and mud, and her driveway was pitted with holes. The road crew soon opened a path from her house, and the neighbors helped each other as they could.

It is no surprise that Ann's family's motto is "Life is good.," for she saw the flood as "quite an adventure." She was pleased that the water had not damaged her house or barn, and she got a kick out of being interviewed for TV. Later, when she received no aide from the state and had to spend quite a lot of money to restore her meadow, she made it drier and more level than before.

It took a while for Ann to become a U.S. citizen, as bureaucratic problems wore her out. But then she received a new application, arranged by her friends Lydia and Michael. Ann studied U.S. government and history and passed the citizenship test with flying colors. On July 9, 2007, she was sworn in as an American citizen, followed by a party at the Landgrove Inn with much of Windham in attendance, as well as her beloved brother Carl and members of the "Swedish Mafia", a group of Swedish women living in the area who are Ann's treasured friends. "I wanted to vote in elections," she says, "and I belong here. I'm more American than Swedish. I have always loved this country."

Asked to compare the two nations, she says, "Life is easier here, not always financially, but there is greater enthusiasm here, and people are willing to work hard for what they want." She says Sweden is a much older country and was a warrior nation in the past. Her hometown was burned down, usually by the Russians, and rebuilt many times. Now a peaceful nation, Sweden has national health and a whole system of social services. One example that Ann says always gets a reaction here is maternity leave. Both parents with a newborn have one year's maternity leave with pay, and quite a few fathers take advantage of this.

Ann says this without judgment, just as she states, "Sweden is the most liberated country in the world, and here it is not like that." But there is no doubt about her feelings for her current home, just as there isn't for many of us who come from other places. For Ann, Robert Frost said it best, and she shows me his quote which hangs on her wall: "Vermont. Of course it's my state! I don't know whether I adopted Vermont or Vermont adopted me.... Either way's good enough. I'm rooted in."

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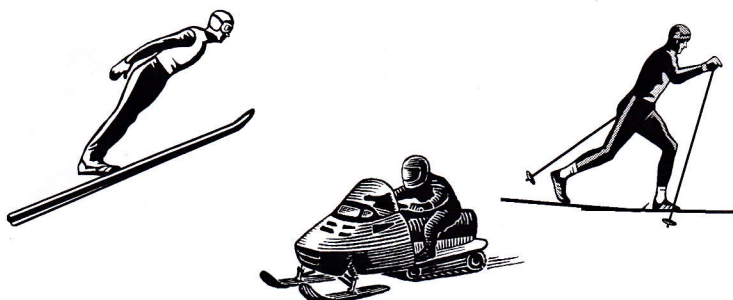
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**ARE YOU READY?**

Meeting House Lift

by *Bill Koutrakos*

The Windham Meeting House is a property located in the center of the Town of Windham and is a focal point of the community. The property enjoys views of the village and beyond. The building with its post and beam framing is a structure to be admired. Prominent builders and architects come from afar to see it and are in awe of how it was put together in 1802. The building was not completed for some years later, and has since been renovated. Also, an addition was built to make it more useable as a Town Hall, Town Library, Meeting Room for various community organizations and exercise groups, as well as a church.

For those who are unaware of the ownership of the Meeting House, the property and building are owned by the Windham Congregational Church, Inc. EXCEPT for a portion of the building on the lower level, approximately 22' x 45', owned by the Town of Windham. In short, that is the western half of the Meeting Room. For those interested in this purchase by the Town of Windham, photocopies from the Town Records are available at the Town Office. It appears that negotiations started at \$175 on September 3, 1851 as recorded in Book 3 and the sale completed December 31, 1852 for the sum of \$200, with conditions, as recorded in Book 7 page 171.

At present the complete lower level of the Windham Meeting House is handicapped accessible. For many years, however, there has been a wish by some to have handicapped accessibility to the upper level. The lift is approved by the American Disabilities Act. The Windham Congregational Church has started construction for the installation of a Vertical Platform Lift, with the cooperation of the Society of Friends of the Windham Meeting House, the Select Board and the Vermont Preservation Trust and Historical Society. The lift should be completed by the beginning of December.

Much of the funding for this project has been raised through the Society of Friends of the Windham Meeting House. Those who may be interested in the maintenance and preservation of the building should consider joining the group. The president is Peter Newton, Treasurer is Greg Noel, Secretary is Ernest Friedli.

With the installation of the lift, the building is now more readily useable for functions in addition to church meetings. The Yankee Male Chorus has performed in the upper level and arts and crafts have been exhibited there. Perhaps the annual Town Meeting could be held in the upper level so tables for lunch may be preset on the lower level.

One must remember there should be a separation of church and state. This has been well noted and explained by the Secretary of State. Having said that, a building is a building. A church is made up of parishioners. The Windham Meeting House is a building and is there for use by the Community of Windham, respecting the ownership by the Town of Windham and the Windham Congregational Church.

In conclusion, the writer of this article is a resident of the Town of Windham and an Associate Member of the Windham Congregational Church. Any opinions expressed are his alone and not those of the municipality or church.



Our Unsung Hero

by Gina Noel

Many thanks to Lydia Pope France, last month's News & Notes editor. While I was out camping in the northwestern National Parks, Lydia picked up the gauntlet and helped the team produce the September/October issue. She did a fabulous job. Over the years, Lydia has also contributed articles, photographs, internet resources and generally been willing and superbly qualified to fill in as needed. She has always done this with a generous spirit and has shied away from any recognition.

Lydia, the jig is up! The entire team thanks you for your support and your unselfish willingness to pitch in—often at the last minute. Kudos from us and the entire community.

What is a Town Service Officer?

By Edith Serke

Earlier this year, at their regular meeting, the Windham Board of Selectmen appointed me as the new Town Service officer for one year. When Mary Boyer asked me if I was willing to accept the appointment, I said “yes”, even though I had no idea what the position entailed. (I have yet to learn how to say “no”.) I was given a very brief description of the position, which says “The duties of town service officers are to receive applications for assistance, to investigate, make determinations of eligibility for general assistance, grant from funds advanced to him for emergency general assistance and to perform other duties, including such investigations, under the welfare code as the commissioner (of the Department for Children and Families) may direct.”

“General assistance” means financial aid to provide the necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, fuel, electricity, medical care and other items as the commissioner may prescribe by regulation when a need is found to exist and the applicant is otherwise found eligible.

During normal business hours the State Economic Services office in Springfield, VT, 885-8862, administers the program. During off hours, your Town Service Officer (Edith Serke, 874-4812) administers the program. Benefits are limited to Vermont residents, unless the need is to help a transient continue to his/her destination. Persons receiving the help must be U.S. citizens. Town Service Officers will ask for an ID, Social Security #, date of birth, source of income for all household members, the last place of residence, if the person receives any state/federal benefits, and what led them to their current situation. The most common issues are for housing, transportation, fire damage, heat, and domestic violence. In the case of fire, the American Red Cross is the first resource. In cases of domestic violence, the police are usually involved.

The number to call for general information about available services is 211, which is a statewide toll-free number available 24/7 and manned by well-informed, polite staff ready to help.



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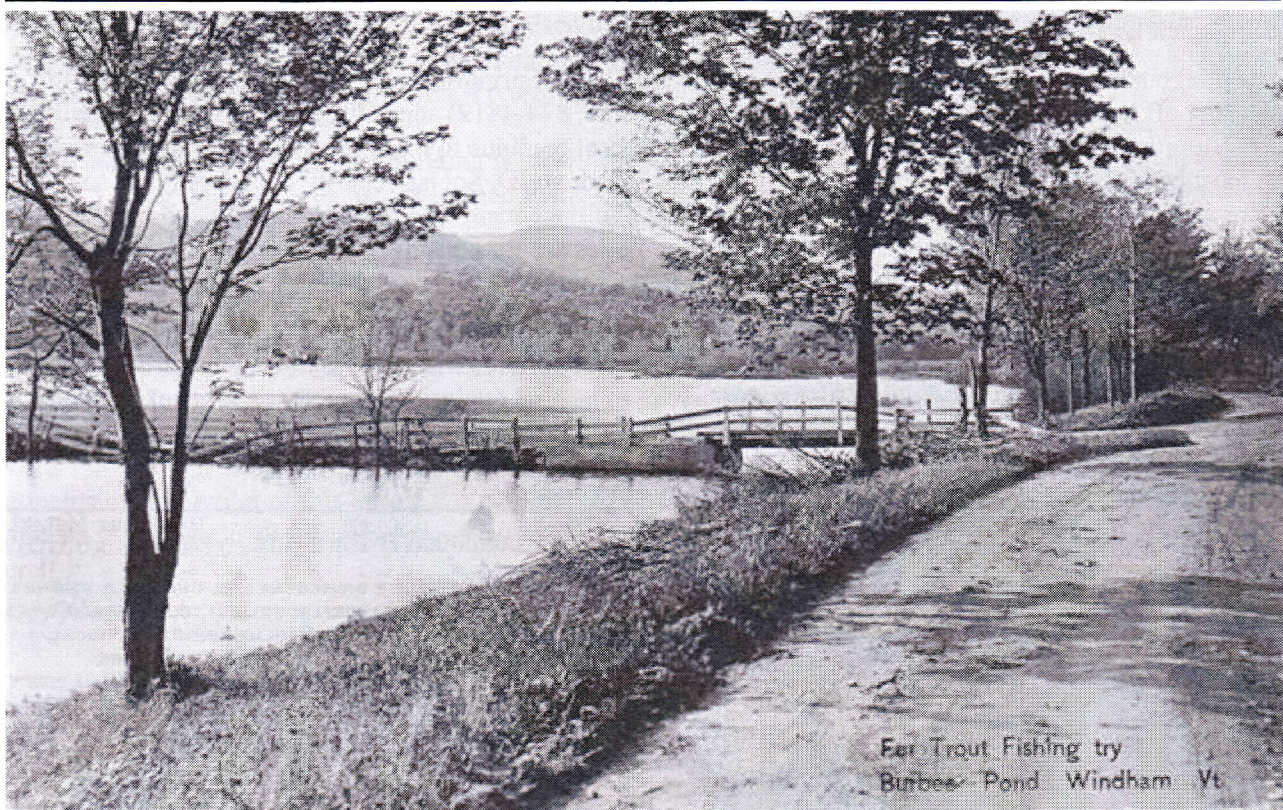
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Historic Postcards of Burbee Pond Road submitted by Margaret Woodruff and Lydia Pope France

Windham Community Organization Holiday Meeting

by Dawn Bower



'Tis the season, yes the holidays are approaching, and the WCO will have its Annual Holiday Meeting on Wednesday, December 16, 2009, at 7 pm at the Meeting House. It is always one of the fun nights of the year. All members bring in home baked cookies to assemble trays to show our appreciation to our Town Clerk, the town road crew, our school teachers/assistant, along with the bus driver, and our mail carriers.

We also remember our Community friends that are shut-in or in need. When finished, we all get a chance to sample the remaining delicious goodies with our coffee. Then more fun continues with our gift exchange, called Yankee Swap which is another time of fun and laughs. Everyone is invited. Please bring a dozen of your favorite cookies and a \$5 wrapped gift for the Yankee Swap.

We not only have good times at some of our meetings, we are busy raising money to help people in our community. Just recently we had Heather Chodoir, a social worker from Grace Cottage Hospital, come to a meeting to speak to us about her job. Her presentation was most interesting and informative. There are many trials and tribulations that come with her job but the rewards of helping others go beyond any challenges the job brings. Our goal, among other things for the WCO, is to reach out to people in the Windham area in need and Heather will be a good resource for referrals.

Happy Holidays from the WCO. We hope to see you on the 16th.

Windham Gets Three First Responders

by Mary Boyer

Three Windham residents are enrolled in the First Responder Class being conducted by the Londonderry Rescue Squad. It will be a great addition to Windham to have our own responders. We appreciate the commitment of Sally Hoover, Mike McLain and Meredith Tips-McLain for giving their time to become certified and be available to respond to emergency calls.



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Library News

by Beverly Carmichael

There is still time to enter your "Capturing the Beauty of Windham" photos for our annual photo contest. Judging will take place during the Harvest Supper on November 7. Three gift certificates to a local bookstore will be awarded. Calendars will be on sale at the library and at our town offices from Thanksgiving until Christmas. Keep our town calendar in mind for stocking stuffers this holiday season.

Our book club continues to meet the first Wednesday of each month. Our next selection will be, "Eat, Pray, Love," by Elizabeth Gilbert. We have 15 copies of this book available so even if you cannot attend our discussion, please feel free to stop at the library and pick up a copy for your enjoyment. You may keep this book for one month.

Some of the new books in our library are:

"Homer and Langley," by E. L. Doctorow

Doctorow, whose literary trophy shelf has got to be overflowing by now, delivers a small but sweeping masterpiece about the infamous New York hermits, the Collyer brothers. When WWI hits and the Spanish flu pandemic kills Homer and Langley's parents, Langley, the elder, goes to war, with his Columbia education and his godlike immunity to such an ordinary fate as death in a war. Homer, alone and going blind, faces a world considerably dimmed though more deliciously felt by his other senses. Doctorow's achievement is in not undermining the dignity of two brothers who share a lush landscape built on imagination and incapacities. It's a feat of distillation, vision and sympathy.

"The Wilderness Warrior," by Douglas Brinkley

Theodore Roosevelt spent the day of July 1, 1908, the tenth anniversary of the Battle of San Juan Hill, creating forty-five national forests. In this biographical study of T.R.'s campaign to save hundreds of millions of acres of wilderness, Brinkley writes that "the forestry movement would be forced down his opponents' throats." Roosevelt's intense love for nature was, Brinkley makes clear, a conqueror's love—triumphal Darwinism—and included a "blood lust" in hunting the wildlife he championed.

"Socks From the Toe Up," by Wendy D. Johnson

Knitting socks from the toe up has a few advantages: you can try on the sock as you knit, and you can adjust the height of the cuff to the amount of yarn you have. Johnson provides five different techniques for starting a sock with the toe; three different heel techniques; several cast-off options; as well as instruction on knitting using double-pointed needles, two circular needles, or one long circular needle.

We would like to thank Ernie and Sheila Friedli's children for their generous donation of many new children's and young teen books to our shelves. Donations of new books are always welcome.



Business Opportunity! A spacious ranch with a new kitchen, large living room with fireplace, 3 bdrms and 2 baths. A 2 stall horse barn is currently used for retail, a 2 car garage, an in-ground pool and a beautifully designed patio are fine features! Apple trees grace the grounds and a stream on the rear border.

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Windham Congregational Church News

by Nancy Dyke

EIGHT MAIDS A MILKING ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

Choose your favorite characters now from THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS and begin practicing your moves because Christine Dyke has agreed to join us once more in Windham for the annual Carol Sing and Tree Lighting. This year it falls on Friday, November 27 at 4:30 PM. This is the place to be on the day after Thanksgiving. Bring family and guests to join with neighbors in a fun rendition of your favorite Christmas songs and carols. Hot chocolate by Beverly Carmichael and Jean Coburn's famous snicker doodles are added attractions. If you miss this event, you miss one of the highlights of the year!

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION on SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 at 6:00 PM

We're looking forward to this Christmas celebration with even more anticipation than usual because last year we were snowed out. Please plan to join us this year for a program called "The Greening of the Church" including a nativity scene and the annual candle lighting. There will be great music and community participation as always. An offering will be taken to support local needs in the form of the Londonderry Food Pantry as well as needy orphans in Rwanda. See you there.

A NEW LIFT

The new lift is in progress! If you stop up at the Meeting House you will see that the space for the lift has been framed in and by the time you receive this newsletter, it will have been installed. After the finishing work is completed, it will be ready for use. The long project is coming to completion. See an article on Page 6 in this issue for more information.

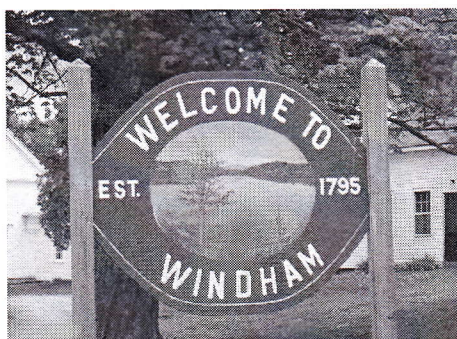
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

On Sunday, Sept. 20 Ginny and Dave Crittenden and Claire and Bob Trask attended a Peace Festival at the Blue Gentian Lodge on Magic Mountain sponsored by Koinonia of Vermont. Rev Paul and Dorothy Alberti have been active in this effort for a number of years. Dave Crittenden presented information about the Windham Church's participation in the Dismas House ministry in Rutland. Other efforts in the area are the clean water project of the Rotary Club, the Thrifty Attic, individual participation in Hospice and in Meals on Wheels, and support of Bread For The World efforts.

SUMMER DAY CAMP

The Windham Congregational Church is pleased to report a very successful Summer Day Camp held in our community in July, led by Cindy Kehoe and Beth MacDonald. Projects, swimming trips and making things were some of the highlights. In August, Mr. Parker-Jennings led a soccer camp for three afternoons. Both of these events provided positive summer activities for Windham kids.





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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Every Sunday - **Windham Congregational Church** (UCC) has worship services at 9:30 AM: everyone invited.

Every Sunday and Thursday - **Valley Bible Church** has services: Sunday - 9:45 AM Sunday School; 11:00 AM Worship, followed by lunch and 1:00 PM Afternoon Services; Thursday - 7:00 PM Prayer Meeting and Bible Study.

Every Wednesday - **Windham Town Library** open at Meeting House from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. Also at that time: reading group on first Wednesday of the month.

Wednesdays, 9:00 to 12:00 - **Town Listers'** office hours at the Town Office

Mondays, Nov. 2 and 16 - Dec. 7 - **Select Board** meets at 6:30 PM at the Town Office. Public Invited.

Thursdays, Nov. 12 and Dec. 10 - **Planning Board** meets at 7:00 PM at the Town Office. Public Invited

Wednesday, Dec. 16 - **Windham Community Organization Holiday Meeting** at 7:00 PM at the Meeting House

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - **Town Office Hours** - 10:00 to 3:00 PM

Saturday, Nov. 7 - **Harvest Supper** - 5 PM at the Meeting House

Friday, Nov. 27 - **Christmas Tree Lighting and Caroling** - 4:30 PM at the Windham Congregational Church

Sunday, Dec. 20 - **Christmas Celebration** - 6:00 PM at the Windham Congregational Church