



## Arts + Leisure

An a cappella singing group with classical roots will bring close-harmony jazz to town.



## Stick stars

An OV senior again leads the Addison Independent Field Hockey All-Star Team. See Page 1B.



## Raising hope

Area clergy have organized a gathering in response to two recent acts of hate. See Page 10A.

# ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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## Thanksgiving blaze offers more reasons to be grateful

By GAEN MURPHREE

STARKSBORO — Starksboro resident Lausanne Allen had a little something else to be thankful for this Thanksgiving: Her home didn't burn down.

As they exited the house on Frank Orvis Road to join friends down the street for their Thanksgiving feast, she and husband Brian Anderson noticed smoke pouring out of their adjacent workshop building.

"I've got my fiddle in one hand and the pie in the other, and we're thinking do we take the car?," said Allen. "If we had taken the car, we would have probably not seen the fire ... But we decided to walk. And as we got close to the shop, we could see the smoke rolling out over the door and knew something was (See Fire, Page 14A)

## Rifle hunters bag a record number of bucks



FRANK RAYMOND POSES with the 205-pound, 9-point buck that he shot in Addison on Nov. 14 as his grandson Jeb celebrates in the background. Raymond took the trophy animal to Vermont Field Sports in Middlebury to be weighed. Word is that Raymond's deer gave him bragging rights over hunting buddy Kevin Kayhart, who the same day shot a 198-pound, 7-point in Walham that he had weighed at Rack 'N Reel in New Haven.

Photo courtesy of Jessie Raymond

## 2016 season easily best since ban on spikehorns

By ANDY KIRKALDY

ADDISON COUNTY — Freezers throughout Addison County are packed with venison, and in many local homes that dish probably served as the main course on Thanksgiving.

That's because the 2016 rifle season in Addison County was easily the most successful since 2005, when the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife banned shooting two-point "spikehorn" bucks during Vermont's 16-day November rifle season.

In all, hunters brought 573 bucks to be weighed at the county's nine official wildlife weigh stations between Nov. 12 and 27. That total that was 29 percent higher than 2015's rifle season's number, which until this fall was the highest since 2005.

In 2015, the county's weigh stations handled a post law-change local record of 444 deer, and area hunters shattered that mark by 129 bucks this November.

The county's seven-year rifle season average coming into this season was 385, meaning this season was a full 50 percent better than average.

(See Rifle season, Page 7A)

## HOPE Holiday Shop offers free toys for kids

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Area residents with a steady income can look forward each year to "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday" to get great deals on holiday gifts.

But there are some in Addison County who can't afford to make purchases even when they are marked down 60 percent.

Fortunately for those folks, there's a local gift that keeps on giving — the Helping Overcome Poverty's Effect (HOPE) Holiday Shop, which annually offers free clothing, toys and books to Addison County families who would otherwise not be able to give their kids much of anything for Christmas.

Alicia, a divorced mom from Starksboro who is on disability and has a 7-year-old daughter, was among the qualifying parents brows-

ing through the bounty of gift selections on Monday at the Holiday Shop, located in the Community Services Center on Boardman Street in Middlebury. Monday was opening day for the shop, which will serve an estimated 400 and 600 Addison County children, ages birth through 18, by the time it closes for the season on Dec. 23.

"It's very hard for families like us to be able to afford Christmas for our kids, especially with the way the economy is going right now," said Alicia, who is on disability and asked that her full name not be revealed.

"And it's really expensive, food-wise and gift-wise." She discovered the HOPE Holiday Shop around six years ago, when her daughter was 1. She has used the service annually to supplement what (See HOPE, Page 16A)

*"I'm glad that people do this for us, and I'm glad it gives our kids a chance to experience what it's like to have these kinds of gifts."*

— Alicia, mother of a 7-year-old

## Heirlooms create flavors at Windfall

### 30 varieties blended into craft cider

This is the fourth in a series profiling the effect of the hard cider boom on Addison County apple orchards.

By GAEN MURPHREE

CORNWALL — Award-winning hard cider maker Brad Koehler calls himself an "accidental orchardist."

Koehler and his wife (noted chef, food writer and UVM professor Amy Trubek) were looking for a place near Middlebury, after Koehler landed a job some 14 years ago managing residential dining services at Middlebury College. The couple had been teaching at the New England Culinary Institute in Montpelier and in that role had been actively promot-

ing the local foods movement and trying to connect chefs with farmers.

"We both felt that it was important if we were going to be active participants in this discussion and in this movement that we had to be active participants both as chefs and as food producers," said Koehler. "You gotta get your hands dirty."

The couple's search for a home landed them in Cornwall — on land that just happened to include an abandoned three-acre orchard.

"It was completely overgrown," said Koehler. But Koehler's windfall wasn't (See Apples, Page 16A)



WINDFALL GOLDEN



ORCHARDIST AND CIDER maker Brad Koehler of Windfall Orchard in Cornwall checks on a graft on one of his trees. Koehler blends 30 varieties of heirloom apples to get the flavor profile for his award-winning ciders.

Independent photo/Gaen Murphree



## 'Nutcracker's Adventure'

CATHERINE CARPENTER REHEARSES a scene from the Middlebury Community Players' production of "The Nutcracker's Adventure" Tuesday night. The show opens Friday and runs through Sunday in the Middlebury Union High School auditorium. For more photos see Page 11A.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

## Sheriff's campaign contribution scrutinized

### Used department fund to cover high bailiff ad

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — Addison County Sheriff Don Keeler is drawing criticism from some state officials for using some of his department's funds during the Nov. 8 election to back his preferred candidate for high bailiff, an official who has the power to arrest the sheriff and potentially replace that person if he or she is unable to perform the duties of that office.

It was on Nov. 10 that Keeler paid \$154 for advertising that had run in the Addison Independent in support of Charles Clark, who was the Republican candidate in a four-way race for Addison County high bailiff. Clark finished second in the race (with 6,487 votes) to the winner, Democrat Ron Holmes, who received 8,309 votes.

Keeler paid for the ad with a check from the account of the Addison (See Payment, Page 15A)



## By the way

Jack Mayer, a local doctor turned author, will discuss his latest book in a talk at Bristol's Lawrence Memorial Library next Thursday, Dec. 8, at 7 p.m. Mayer's non-fiction book "Before the Court of Heaven" recounts origins of the Third Reich through the story of Ernst Werner Techow. Defeated, humiliated, and in chaos, post-World War I Germany was imperiled by leftist revolution and right-wing violence. Techow, a German right-wing na- (See By the way, Page 15A)

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# Apples

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just any three acres. Windfall Orchard (as it's still called) had once been the passion and pride of local physician Ted Collier. Collier's long-time orchard manager Art Blaise (both are now deceased), helped Koehler understand the hidden gems in his tangle of trees.

"Becoming as good of an apple grower as I was a chef, that's something that I'd like to do. But Art Blaise probably forgot more than I'll ever learn," said Koehler.

One of the most important skills Blaise taught Koehler was how to graft. And grafting has become central to Koehler's business as an orchardist and cider maker.

Most of the three acres Koehler purchased along with his home were Macintosh trees. But at a mere three acres, Koehler knew he couldn't even begin to produce enough Macs to make a profit. He also knew he was interested in a far different flavor profile and wanted to raise heirloom varieties of apples. So he decided to get the most value out of his mature trees by grafting new varieties onto them.

Now these former Macintosh trees are producing a range of European cider varieties, heirloom eating apples and an exciting range of wild apples found in Addison County as part of Shacksbury Cider's Lost Apple Project.

"These are the apples that our

ancestors would have eaten," said Koehler.

Flavor is everything to Koehler, whose success in creating one of the country's top-rated ice ciders and top-rated farmhouse-style cider is based on his hand-crafted, small-production approach to cider.

For the cider bottled under the Windfall Orchard name, Koehler blends around 30 varieties of apples to create the signature flavor profile. He then ferments the mixture using only the wild yeasts that are naturally occurring in the wood of the press or on the skins of the fruits themselves. Unlike large-batch ciders, such as those produced at Citizen or Woodchuck, Koehler doesn't manipulate the flavor post-fermentation but rather creates his flavor profile through the apples he selects and blends beforehand.

Four classes of apples are traditionally used to make hard cider, Koehler explains: sharp, bittersweet, bittersweet and sweet. Each class has a different range of acidity and tannin levels. For hard ciders, tannins are especially important.

"Tannin is what makes you want to spit the apple out," Koehler said. "Tannin is bitter. Tannin is what makes you feel like you've eaten a cotton ball, like your mouth just totally dries out."

But beyond these foundational components, Koehler is interested in an even more elusive range of fla-

vors found in heirloom eating varieties such as Winter Banana, Arkansas Black, Esopus Spitzenburg, Westfield Seek No Further, Blue Pearmain, and others.

"The range of flavors are like what grapes can exhibit in wine. Some are very aromatic. Some are spicy. Some are herbal," Koehler said. "I have one particular apple called a White Winter Pearmain that is perfumey; it has almost a jasmine-like flavor to it. I have the Windfall Golden, which is a wild chance that we named here; it tastes more like a pear than it tastes like an apple. The Winter Banana starts tasting like a banana after it sits in storage. These are flavor profiles that you can't find in supermarket apples."

How much Windfall's mix relies on traditional European cider varieties, how much on heirloom eating apples and how much on wild apples found in Addison County is proprietary. But Koehler says that as an orchardist and as a cider maker, he believes the most promising are those apples gleaned from Addison County hedgerows as part of Shacksbury Cider's ongoing Lost Apple Project.

"These are wild trees that have survived here. And these are varieties that were produced here," he said. "That cross pollination that created that seed that created that tree that created that fruit, which is all chance, all happened here."

With the exception of Dabinet, a



BRAD KOEHLER, OWNER of Windfall Orchard in Cornwall, poses with some of the hard ciders he produces from his apples.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

French variety, many of the European traditional hard cider varieties don't seem to grow vigorously enough in Vermont's harsh climate.

Windfall cider is in an upper-niche market, sold and enjoyed more like wine than beer. A bottle of the farmhouse cider retails locally for \$11.99; a large bottle of the ice cider retails for \$26.99.

While Koehler is proud of his product and proud of the ways his hand-crafted, small-production approach focuses on achieving flavor pre-fermentation and uses only wild yeasts, he also emphasized that the fact there are a range of ciders made in Vermont benefits all cider makers.

"It's all great," he said. "We all

have this focus of making cider a viable industry and (also) getting Vermont — and the Champlain Valley most specifically — to be recognized as the Napa Valley of cider or to be recognized as a specific geographic location where the best ciders in the country are produced.

"And it takes all of us to make that happen, to put us on the map."

# HOPE

(Continued from Page 1A)

she is able to buy her daughter with her limited funds.

"It's a good opportunity for kids to have a little extra for Christmas," she said of the shop. "If it wasn't for this, us low-income adults would not be able to afford Christmas presents for our kids."

The HOPE shop, Alicia said, has also allowed her to maintain her daughter's belief in Santa Claus. The shop hours allow her to discreetly pick out gifts while her daughter is at school.

"I'm happy to see my daughter's face on Christmas morning," Alicia said. "I'm glad that people do this for us, and I'm glad it gives our kids a chance to experience what it's like to have these kinds of gifts."

The gifts are diverse, colorful, utilitarian and selected with the goal of exercising the children's imaginations, according to HOPE Executive Director Jeanne Montross. The puzzles, mittens, coats, toy trucks, board games, rocket ships, books, miniature cars and many other items have all been provided by area residents or purchased by HOPE with donated funds. A nice chunk of the inventory comes from gift idea tags that contributors pluck from Christmas trees set up at area businesses, churches and institutions, including Middlebury College, UTC Aerospace Systems, the National Bank of Middlebury, Agri-Mark/Cabot, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and the Weybridge Congregational Church. The St. Ambrose, St. Mary's and St. Peter's Catholic Churches have already sent in gifts from their respective donations efforts. Porter Hospital and Middlebury's Mary Hogan Elementary School are also conducting holiday toy drives this year, according to Montross.

Helen Haerle is among a handful of local volunteers who help stock and operate the Holiday Shop each year. Her specialty is supervising the shop displays and keeping account of the inventory of gifts. Haerle is perfect for the job for two major reasons: She coordinated the former St. Mary's Christmas Shop for 15 years before merging that operation with HOPE's annual effort; and she gained a wealth of retail experience as owner of the former Lazarus Department Store in Middlebury.

"People are so generous; they give really nice things," Haerle said.

"It always feels good to do something for somebody else."

## THOSE IN NEED

In order to qualify for a shopping trip at the HOPE Holiday Store, parents cannot earn a household income of more than 185 percent of the federal poverty guideline. That's around \$44,000 (pre-tax) annually for a fam-

ily of four, according to Montross.

HOPE officials will also consider hardship cases involving parents who might have some savings, but who have recently fallen on hard times — such as a job loss or house fire, for example.

"It's for low-income people who otherwise wouldn't be able to have gifts for their children, unless they were using the rent money or the fuel money," Montross explained.

Holiday Shop customers are assigned gift limits based on family size. In general, qualifying families, according to Montross, can make the following selections per child: one toy, something warm to wear or an outfit that "makes them feel good," a game or craft, and up to four books.

"We want to promote reading, literacy and empowerment," Montross said.

There are additional stacks of surplus material from which parents can choose a family gift, or smaller toys, Montross noted.

"Lillian" was another parent carefully combing through the Holiday

Shop's gift selections on Monday. She lingered a little longer than Alicia, and with good reason; Lillian has six children at home and has limited work hours. Lillian (not her real name) diligently shops at clearance sales most of the year in order to get presents at the lowest possible cost, but she can only stretch a dollar so far.

This is the fourth year she's availed herself of Holiday Shop merchandise, and she's grateful for the help.

"I think this is a Godsend; it's so helpful and I appreciate it more than words can express," Lillian said of the free gifts for her children.

Montross knows there are many more Addison County parents like Alicia and Lillian who depend on the Holiday Shop to allow their children — for at least one day — to share in the excitement that other kids feel in receiving something nice and new on Christmas morning.

"What we're trying to do is level the playing field a little bit," Montross said of the shop.



A VISITOR AT the Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects Holiday Shop picks out some gifts for her daughter. The Holiday Shop, which opened on Monday, offers free children's gifts, clothing and books to parents who would otherwise not be able to buy their kids Christmas presents.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

She recalled a particularly emotional case on a Christmas Eve a few years ago involving a mom who

was crying in a vehicle parked in the HOPE parking lot. The woman explained she had no food and no

Christmas gifts to offer her son. Montross said HOPE officials were able to bring her into the building to make some gift and food selections. Her little boy's eyes lit up when he saw a can of baked beans in the food shelf.

"We're going to be able to eat beans for dinner!" the boy exclaimed to his mom, according to Montross.

Donors can drop their gifts off at HOPE's Boardman Street headquarters during business hours, Monday through Friday. The gifts should be unwrapped. Folks looking for ideas of specific gifts to buy can get a list of suggestions by emailing receptionist@hope-vt.org.

The HOPE Holiday Gift Shop is now open to qualifying parents Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., until Dec. 23. The shop will also be open from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Dec. 17, for folks unable to visit during the workweek. Montross stressed that parents must first call ahead (388-3608) to make an appointment to pick out gifts from the shop.

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