

ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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36 Pages

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Pianist aims to electrify

• *Brandon Music will host a performance of Beethoven, Debussy and Mussorgsky. See Arts Beat on Page 10.*

VTrans explains \$3.5M airport plan

• *Agency maps out meeting schedule for Middlebury runway project. See Page 3.*

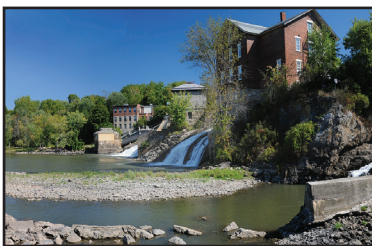


Sales of artwork to benefit school

• *The Quarry Hill School's annual art auction is this Wednesday. See Page 23.*

Mt. Abe, Tiger teams square off

• *Soccer squads from both schools met at MUHS this past weekend. See what happened in Sports, Pages 18-20.*



City working on basin integration

• *Vergennes is developing a master plan for which it is seeking feedback from residents. See Page 2.*

United Way targets \$700K in fund drive

Bristol family's story fuels campaign

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — The United Way of Addison County typically calls on people with extra resources to help bankroll its annual fund drive to aid local families who are less fortunate.

This year UWAC is getting a big assist from one of those less fortunate

families as the organization seeks to raise \$700,000 to help more than two dozen Addison County nonprofits that dispense food, clothing, counseling, transportation and other vital services to low-income residents.

Helping UWAC this year is a (See *United Way*, Page 24)

New Haven native takes love of dancing around the globe

By GAEN MURPHREE

NEW HAVEN/NEW YORK CITY — Like a lot of little girls in Addison County, Zoe Rabinowitz started studying dance at age five with longtime dance teacher Patty Smith.

Today the New Haven native is living the dream as a New York City-based dancer and choreogra-

pher about to set off on a tour of Jerusalem, Japan and Korea with Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre, a dance group that she co-founded 10 years ago and of which she is the associate artistic director.

Though dancing has allowed the 31-year-old to travel the world, she always remembers (See *Dancer*, Page 14)



LEONARD JOHNSON, A seasonal apple picker from Jamaica, picks with both hands in New Haven last week as he works to clear a tree of apples that will be used for cider making at Happy Valley Orchard in Middlebury. Johnson is one of more than 200 seasonal pickers currently working in Addison County.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

Jamaicans ensure apple crop's success

310 working in Vermont

By GAEN MURPHREE

ADDISON COUNTY — The success of one of Vermont's most iconic crops — crisp Vermont apples and the acres of picturesque orchards that produce them — rests quite literally in the hands of workers from an island nation over 2,000 miles to the south.

Seasonal workers from Jamaica have been harvesting New England crops since the 1940s, when

the battlefields and munitions factories of World War II left gaps in the agricultural workforce. Most local orchardists can't actually remember a time when the Vermont apple crop hasn't been picked by workers from Jamaica, but the consensus is that since about the 1970s, Jamaican hands have plucked apples from the trees and rolled them into bins with the speed, skill and numbers necessary to harvest commercial crops.

To bring in this year's harvest, there are 310 apple pickers from Jamaica in Vermont overall

— 209 of them in Addison County, according to Alyson Eastman, who brokers the complicated federal and international paperwork that brings the workers from Jamaica to America as part of the federal H2A program for seasonal agricultural workers.

"They are critical," said Steve Justis, executive director of the Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association.

"Growers spend a fair amount of money to ad- (See *Apples*, Page 15)



Apples

(Continued from Page 1)

vertise locally, as they're required to by the U.S. Department of Labor, which is trying to protect the domestic workforce. But most of the domestic workforce — and that includes Vermonters — don't want to climb ladders, and they don't want to do the kinds of things the Jamaican workers are used to doing."

Christiana Hodges, co-owner of the 200-acre Sunrise Orchards in Cornwall, explained that although plenty of local people work at the orchard throughout the year — in such varied jobs as pruning and caring for the trees, packing, sales, delivery and marketing — typically between zero and six local residents respond to the orchard's annual postings for picking jobs.

"The Jamaican workers are absolutely essential," Hodges said. "Without them we would never get the numbers of people that we need to actually pick this crop in a timely manner before it falls on the ground. They are able to work quickly and maintain the quality of the fruit throughout, and so that means that we can get a 130,000-bushel crop picked in a timely manner because 80,000 bushels of those are McIntosh, and they all ripen at the same time.

"They work in teams very efficiently. They are skilled workers, and this is a job that requires a lot of skill."

Apple pickers typically begin their day in the orchard by 7 a.m. and put in a 10- or 11-hour day, working seven days a week. If it rains, they might get a day or a few hours off.

"You just go, and you go," said Blake Harrison, who works closely with the workers as he supervises the harvest at Happy Valley Orchard's trees on Pearson Road in New Ha-



APPLE PICKERS FROM Jamaica Austin Powell, left, Peter Duffus, Keith Royal and Leonard Johnson pose around a trailer full of apple crates at Happy Valley's Pearson Road orchard in New Haven last week.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

ven. "When you're not picking, the apples are falling off the trees and you lose money. So the point is: get as many apples into boxes as you can and get them to where they need to go. That's the name of the game. The crews pick all day long."

A skilled harvester can pick about 100 bushels a day. With each bushel weighing about 50 pounds, that's about 5,000 pounds of apples that each man carries down the ladder from the tops of the trees to the bins

in the field every day. As workers move from tree to tree, each brings along a ladder that is 16 feet long or more, which itself weighs about 40 pounds. The workers carry the ladders across the length of the orchard on their shoulders and work them deftly into tight spots, using the delicately tapering tops of the special apple-harvesting ladders to wedge them into the trees.

But strength and stamina alone won't harvest a commercially vi-

able apple. Some Vermont apples are picked for cider, both hard and sweet, so looks don't matter. But most are destined for the kitchen table, where perfection is all. Consumers only want to purchase perfectly ripe apples that are blemish free. So in the field, workers must work hard and fast to get the apples off the trees before they drop on the ground, but must do so without bruising the fruit or damaging the trees, especially the tender buds that will become next year's apples. At the same time, for eating apples the crew must determine ripeness as they go, as only cold nights give red apples the final touch of color that makes consumers want to buy.

"This is a job that requires a lot of skill," said Hodges.

"We rely on the expertise of experienced workers like the Jamaicans because they know how to pick the fruit to get it down cleanly without knocking other apples off," said Justis. "Another part is that they don't damage next year's flower buds. They also have to dump the apples gently into a field bin, so that they don't bruise the apples. These are all really critical parts of the apple harvest."

IMPORTANT WAGES

For the Jamaican workers, coming to Vermont to harvest apples is an important boost to their annual wages. This year, according to Eastman, most orchards are paying hourly wages (rather than by piece work), and wages in Vermont are \$11.26/hour, slightly higher than in some neighboring states.

Orchard owners pay for the workers' transportation from Jamaica and once here provide them with housing and some transportation. Some

of the larger orchards provide a meal program (overseen by federal regulations that protect workers). At smaller orchards, the men get rides to Shaw's and Hannaford supermarkets to shop, and then cook their own food back at their on-site housing. Most crews are flown to Florida and then take a Greyhound to Vermont. They usually arrive around Sept. 1 and leave by the end of October.

"It's economic opportunity, it really is," said Harrison. "For some guys, I'm sure there's an adventure element to it. But really it's about making a significant portion of your annual income. One of our crew members told me that if he has a *good* week back home, he'll make about the same as he makes here in a day — in a good week back in Jamaica. So if he works 30 days here that's 30 weeks — 30 *good* weeks — back home. Think of what that means to your family's economy. That's a huge boost."

In the field, the crew in the Pearson Road orchard echo the same theme.

"The apple picking, we like it because it make we have some money to help our family when we back home," said worker Austin Powell, speaking in the richly cadenced English of Jamaica. "It's good to us."

Powell has a daughter, now 23, and a small son born just this month back in Jamaica. He's been coming to the United States for 10 years to supply seasonal agricultural labor, six of those years picking apples in Vermont.

"It help me out a lot to provide schooling for my kids," said crew member Peter Duffus. The men ex- (See Harvest, Page 28)



BLAKE HARRISON, AN orchard manager at Happy Valley's Pearson Road orchard, takes a ride on an apple crate trailer being pulled by picker Austin Powell last week. Harrison works closely with his team of Jamaican workers who pick 10 or 11 hours a day, seven days a week.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

Harvest

(Continued from Page 15)

plain that schooling is not free in Jamaica. Each family must supply tuition. Duffus's work in Vermont will help him provide school tuition for his two teenage sons and 12-year-old daughter.

Back home, Duffus farms sugar cane, cassava and vegetables. He's picked apples in Vermont for three years out of his 11 years coming to the United States. In previous years, he's picked tobacco in Massachusetts, detassled corn in Iowa and picked corn in Georgia. Duffus also practices herbal medicine back in Jamaica, working out of a stand in the marketplace.

For Keith Royal, who's an electrician back home, America provides not just a needed source of income but "experience and uplift to make a life better." Royal explains that in Jamaica an electrician has to negotiate a job based on a price the customer can pay and that given the high cost of materials, workmanship doesn't command the kind of wages it does here. "You cannot kill your customer," said Royal, chuckling. "You have to negotiate."

While Royal, Duffus and Powell are in their 30s and 40s, the most experienced worker on the Pearson

Road crew is Leonard Johnson, in his 60s. Johnson's house burned down last year, so this year's wages will help him put it back together. But more importantly for Johnson are the ways that his Vermont wages will help him provide better medical care for his wife, who has both high blood pressure and diabetes.

UP IN THE TREES

Johnson has been coming to the United States as a seasonal agricultural worker for "40-odd years." He and the rest of the crew burst out laughing at this, with incredulity, thinking about how long Johnson has labored in American fields and all the crops and places he's seen. For the past three years Johnson has picked apples in Vermont. In years previous, he's been to Florida, Connecticut, New York and Virginia, picking everything from sugar cane to fruit to tobacco.

Back up in the trees, deftly climbing ladders and picking apples, the four-man crew cleans a tree in a few minutes flat, the air punctuated by laughter, the occasional thunk of an apple and the intermittent calls of birds in the trees.

All around is a sight that brings tourists flocking to Vermont every fall and makes Vermonters just plain



PETER DUFFUS, AN apple picker from Jamaica, carries a ladder from one tree to the next at Happy Valley's Pearson Road orchard in New Haven last week.

Independent photo/Trent Campbell

happy to be here: row upon row of apple trees, stretching about as far as the eye can see, red globes of fruit gleaming in the green leaves.

"These guys are super hard working, the hardest working people you can imagine," said Harrison. "They

do a job that other people don't want to do that we all benefit from. And they do it because at the end of the day most of them have families, and they're just trying to do what anybody would do, which is make money for their families. They just want

to work; you've got to respect that. And we all have to be thankful that we've got them because otherwise I don't know what our apple industry would look like. We are the beneficiaries of their need and their desire to come here."

MCTV SCHEDULE Channels 15 & 16

MIDDLEBURY COMMUNITY TELEVISION: P.O. Box 785, Middlebury, Vt. 05753

Please see the MCTV website, www.middleburycommunitytv.org, for changes in the schedule; MCTV events, classes and news; and to view many programs online. Submit listings to the above address, or call 388-3062.

MCTV Channel 15

Tuesday, Sept. 22

- 4 a.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 7 a.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 8 a.m. Congregational Church Service
- 10 a.m. Selectboard/Development Review Board (DRB)
- 1 p.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 5 p.m. Rep. Betty Nuovo
- 5:30 p.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 6 p.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 6:15 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 7 p.m. Selectboard
- 10 p.m. Public Affairs/DRB

Wednesday, Sept. 23

- 4 a.m. Public Affairs
- 6:30 a.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 7:30 a.m. Memorial Baptist Church Service
- 9 a.m. Lifelines
- 9:30 a.m. Eckankar
- 10 a.m. Selectboard, DRB, Public Affairs
- 5:15 p.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 5:30 p.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 6 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 6:30 p.m. DRB, Public Affairs
- 9:30 p.m. Eckankar
- 10 p.m. Selectboard

Thursday, Sept. 24

- 4 a.m. Public Affairs
- 5 a.m. Selectboard, Public Affairs
- 8:30 a.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 9:30 a.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 10 a.m. DRB
- Noon Selectboard, Public Affairs
- 4:45 p.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 5 p.m. Eckankar
- 5:30 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 6 p.m. Public Affairs
- 7:30 p.m. Selectboard

Friday, Sept. 25

- 5 a.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 5:15 a.m. Public Affairs
- 7 a.m. DRB, Public Affairs
- 9:30 a.m. Peter Conlon: Downsizing
- 10 a.m. Selectboard, Town Records
- 1 p.m. DRB, Public Affairs
- 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Church Service
- 5:30 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 6 p.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 9 p.m. Las Promesas De Dios

- 9:30 p.m. Rep. Betty Nuovo
- 10 p.m. Green Mountain Care Board

Saturday, Sept. 26

- 4 a.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 6:01 a.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 6:30 a.m. DRB, Public Affairs
- 8:30 a.m. Eckankar
- 9 a.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 9:30 a.m. Rep. Betty Nuovo
- 10 a.m. Selectboard, Town Records, DRB
- 1 p.m. Public Affairs
- 4 p.m. Memorial Baptist Church Service
- 5:30 p.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 5:45 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 6:30 p.m. Selectboard
- 10 p.m. Green Mountain Veterans for Peace
- 11 p.m. Green Mountain Care Board

Sunday, Sept. 27

- 4 a.m. Selectboard, Town Records
- 7 a.m. Green Mountain Veterans for Peace
- 8 a.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 8:30 a.m. Eckankar
- 9 a.m. Catholic Mass
- 9:30 a.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 11 a.m. Memorial Baptist Church Service
- 12:30 p.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 4 p.m. Congregational Church Service
- 5:30 p.m. Eckankar
- 6 p.m. 15-Minute Boot Camp
- 6:15 p.m. Community Bulletin Board
- 7 p.m. Catholic Mass
- 7:30 p.m. Rep. Betty Nuovo
- 8 p.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 8:30 p.m. Public Affairs

Monday, Sept. 28

- 5 a.m. Green Mountain Veterans for Peace
- 6 a.m. Green Mountain Care Board
- 8 a.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 9 a.m. Lifelines
- 10 a.m. Selectboard, DRB, Public Affairs
- 4 p.m. Congregational Church
- 5:30 p.m. Las Promesas de Dios
- 6 p.m. Boot Camp on Location
- 7 p.m. Green Mountain Veterans for Peace
- 8 p.m. Public Affairs from the VMX
- 11:30 p.m. Selectboard

METV Channel 16

Tuesday, Sept. 22

- 5:30 a.m. Yoga

- 6 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 7 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 7:30 a.m. ACSU/Local School Boards
- 1 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 1:30 p.m. Vermont Board of Education
- 4:30 p.m. StoryMatters
- 5 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 6 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 6:30 p.m. School Boards
- 9:30 p.m. Middlebury Five-0

Wednesday, Sept. 23

- 4 a.m. Mozart Festival
- 5:30 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 6 a.m. StoryMatters
- 6:30 a.m. Yoga
- 7 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 7:30 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 8 a.m. Vermont Board of Education
- 11 a.m. Vermont Media Exchange
- 4:30 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 5 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 5:30 p.m. Chronique Francophone
- 6 p.m. StoryMatters
- 6:30 p.m. ACSU/School Boards

Thursday, Sept. 24

- 4:30 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 5 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 5:30 a.m. Yoga
- 6 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 6:30 a.m. StoryMatters
- 7 a.m. ID-4/Local School Boards
- 4:30 p.m. Chronique Francophone
- 5 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 6 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 6:30 p.m. StoryMatters
- 7 p.m. Vermont Board of Education
- 11 p.m. Chronique Francophone
- 11:30 p.m. Middlebury Five-0

Friday, Sept. 25

- 5:30 a.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 6 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 6:30 a.m. Yoga
- 7 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 8:30 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 9 a.m. Vermont Board of Education
- Noon Middlebury Five-0
- 12:30 p.m. StoryMatters
- 1 p.m. Local School Boards
- 6 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 6:30 p.m. Chronique Francophone

- 7 p.m. StoryMatters
- 7:31 p.m. Vermont Media Exchange
- 10 p.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews

Saturday, Sept. 26

- 4:15 a.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 6 a.m. Yoga
- 6:20 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 6:30 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 7 a.m. StoryMatters
- 7:32 a.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 8 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 8:30 a.m. StoryMatters
- 9 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 9:30 a.m. ACSU/Local School Boards
- 3 p.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 5 p.m. StoryMatters
- 5:31 p.m. ID-4 Board
- 6:30 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 7 p.m. Mozart Festival
- 8:30 p.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 10:30 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 11 p.m. Vermont Board of Education

Sunday, Sept. 27

- 4 a.m. Vermont Media Exchange
- 7 a.m. Yoga
- 7:30 a.m. Chronique Francophone
- 9 a.m. Bulletin Board
- 9:30 a.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 10 a.m. StoryMatters
- 10:30 a.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 4:30 p.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 6:30 p.m. Chronique Francophone
- 8 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 8:30 p.m. Middlebury Five-0

Monday, Sept. 28

- 6:10 a.m. Yoga
- 7 a.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews
- 9:30 a.m. Yoga
- 10 a.m. Vermont Media Exchange
- Noon Middlebury Five-0
- 12:30 p.m. StoryMatters
- 1 p.m. Vermont Board of Education
- 4 p.m. Chronique Francophone
- 4:30 p.m. Middlebury Five-0
- 5 p.m. Yoga
- 5:30 p.m. Bulletin Board
- 7 p.m. ID-4 School Board
- 8 p.m. Growing Bright Futures
- 8:30 p.m. Reel Local Film Festival Interviews