

Glover  
Daisy Dopp's  
Vermont.  
8



Newport  
City's dispatch  
replaces state's.  
20

# the Chronicle

THE WEEKLY JOURNAL OF ORLEANS COUNTY

ONE SECTION, 32 PAGES

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ONE DOLLAR

## On board



Noah Jette, a snowboarder from Montgomery Elementary School, keeps his form heading down the slope. Riders in the Castle Cup Extreme competed Wednesday at Jay Peak. The event helps to support the Kingdom Course, an outdoor program for freshmen and sophomores. Judges for the freestyle event evaluated skiers and snowboarders based on form, style, and turning ability. For more, see page 16. Photo by Matthew Wilson

## Feds charge Newport woman

by Joseph Gresser

A Newport woman currently facing charges for allegedly dragging a Vermont State Trooper who tried to make a traffic stop, is also in trouble with federal authorities and facing a charge of conspiring to distribute cocaine, crack, and fentanyl.

The federal charge was filed against Angela R. Birk, 40, in U.S. District Court for Vermont in Burlington Monday. Ms. Birk has yet to appear for arraignment, and unless convicted she is presumed to be innocent.

Tom Vieth, a special agent with the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), submitted an affidavit offering probable cause for the case to go forward.

In it he said that on February 23

(Continued on page seven.)

## Legislators explain their priorities

by Trisha Ingalls

It's crossover week in the Legislature, the time soon after Town Meeting Day that marks a line in which bills originating in either the Senate or House must cross to be taken up by the other body. *The Chronicle* spoke with most Orleans County representatives this week to find out what is most important to them at this stage of the legislative game. The main theme heard across the board is our elected officials want to invest in important projects — infrastructure, workforce, housing, health care, and the environment — that will take advantage of unprecedented levels of federal funds available to the

state through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and they want rural voices and communities to benefit from those investments.

### State Senator Bobby Starr (Essex-Orleans)

Senator Starr of North Troy is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee — any state money has to pass through that committee before being allocated. Senator Starr said he is keenly aware of the millions of dollars needing to be spent for the greatest return possible in the places where it is most needed. He said the committee is a conservative group, so it

(Continued on page ten.)

## Earmarks return to pay for Orleans County projects

by Trisha Ingalls

Congressional earmarks, money U.S. Representatives and Senators appropriate for specific projects in their home districts have returned under a new name — Congressionally Directed Spending Requests. Banned for 11 years in the name of fiscal responsibility, Congress decided to revive the tradition in the current session.

Vermont's congressional delegation approached the work of allocating money to local causes by soliciting requests from towns and organizations. Recently, with the bill that will appropriate the money nearing final passage, Senators Patrick

Leahy and Bernie Sanders and Representative Peter Welch unveiled their choices for federal funding.

They included several important projects in Orleans County.

The Old Stone House Museum and Historic Village in Brownington is to receive \$376,000 for its "Home of Choice Studies" Program. The name, "Home of Choice Studies" comes from African American Alexander Twilight's famous quote upon his return to Brownington after a few years spent in Canada. He called what is now the historic village, "the home of my choice," and where he would spend his life devoted to the education of students. The money will help support and further develop an on-site educational program already being offered, and pay for a pilot component intended to accommodate children in their primary

(Continued on page fourteen.)

## Swartz murder trial delayed

by Joseph Gresser

Thea Swartz, 54, of Orleans, was shot and killed at her home on May 15, 2018. Her husband, Randall Swartz, 62, was to go on trial Monday on charges of first and second degree murder, charges he denies.

Judge Lisa Warren, who was to have presided over the trial, postponed its start Friday, after hearing that Mr. Swartz's lawyer, Robert Katims, had received some electronic evidence related to the case too late to study it, and that Orleans County State's Attorney Jennifer Barrett recently found more evidence, and had, as of March 10, only gone through a third of the material.

Mr. Swartz's trial is to be held in the Hyde Park home of the Criminal Division of Lamoille County Superior Court. It was moved at Mr. Swartz's request due to concerns about excess pre-trial publicity.

In a motion filed on March 9, Mr. Katims told Judge Warren that the state told him it had more information to give Mr. Swartz on February 17, a little more than three weeks before his trial was set to begin.

Mr. Katims received a thumb drive

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# Earmarks fund Old Stone House, NCSU, more

(Continued from page one.)

places of learning — schools.

The Old Stone House plans to hire a small pilot staff to develop a menu of workshops based on many aspects of regional and Orleans County history that can be offered and delivered to schools via after-school and in-school enrichment formats.

Molly Veysey, executive director of the Old Stone House Museum, said, “What an honor to be selected for a funding award like this. I would like to thank all the people who helped put the application together, and especially Senator Leahy’s office and Senator Leahy himself.”

The North Country Supervisory Union will receive \$458,000 to establish a family center, to serve as a central hub for resources and coordinated services for its 2,700 students and their families.

“The congressional directed spending from Senator Sanders’ office provides a great boost to the NCSU Family Center,” said NCSU Superintendent John Castle. “Although we have been able to obtain smaller grants over the past year, these funds provide a substantial amount of resources that enable us to build additional capacity and sustainability. We have come to recognize that the work in supporting students and families is human resource intensive. Subsequently, we will now be able to expand personnel, if even temporarily, to do the kind of outreach and programming that is so important. We also greatly appreciate the kind of capital investment that we can make in purchasing vans

(i.e. “Bernie Buses”) to assist with a wide range of initiatives both in providing transportation here to the family center in Newport or by bringing programming out to folks in our outlying communities. We greatly appreciate the support of Senator Sanders and his staff in procuring these funds on our behalf.”

One of the main goals of the family center and programming provided through these funds is to improve student success.

The town of Derby is getting \$517,000 for a new park in town. The town bought a 16-acre parcel of land located behind the town offices on Route 5 from Corey Poulin several years ago.

Derby will install new tennis and basketball courts to replace the old ones which will be converted into additional parking behind the town offices. The town will also add a half-mile walking path around the 8-acre field with outdoor exercise stations off the path.

It will also add water, electricity, benches and tables and plant trees to transform the area into a quiet, contemplative-style park, ideal for picnics and possibly events in the future.”

“The town of Derby is so grateful to receive funding to build a new park in the center of town,” said Town Administrator Bob Kelley. “This will be of great benefit to the health and well-being for residents of all ages. The additional amenities will also help to attract businesses and employees to our area. We would like to thank Representative Welch for his help and support in securing funding for this project.”

There are no details yet as to exactly when the

transformation of the property will begin, due to the inevitable permitting processes associated with federal funds; however, Mr. Kelley is hopeful that Derby will be able to begin work this year.

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH) in St. Johnsbury will receive \$3,000,000 to add Emergency Room psychiatric bed capacity. Currently, there are not enough mental health beds in the state of Vermont to meet the needs of patients, who may end up waiting in an emergency room up to ten days while suffering from a mental health crisis. According to NVRH CEO Shawn Tester, the planned addition of four rooms is phase one of a larger renovation of the emergency department and west wing of the hospital, which was built in 1972.

“We are incredibly grateful for Senator Leahy’s support,” Mr. Tester said. “This will allow us to comfortably and safely care for patients until they can be transferred to an appropriate facility for care.”

Also of interest to Orleans County residents is an award of \$500,000 to Rutland West Neighborhood Housing Services for the Northeast Kingdom Home Weatherization program. This program, called HEAT Squad, is available to NEK residents and assists with home weatherization projects and affordable energy audits.

The program’s goal is to finance such projects so savings in heating costs will cover payments for weatherization upgrades.



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