

Editorial

Montpelier Fire Department Offers Free Car-Seat Inspections

The Montpelier Fire Department deserves our collective thanks for taking the initiative to offer a new inspection program for child car safety seats. Both Jake Larrabee and Andrew Marineau of the fire department have taken the five-day training and are certified as child-safety-seat technicians.

According to Larrabee, national figures show a more than 80 percent misuse of children's car safety seats.

"Misuse" can mean a number of things. The car seat may be improperly installed, or the car seat may be too large or too small for the child who is using it.

Every car seat carries a manufacturer's expiration date. It's possible that the car seat a child is using may have exceeded its expiration date. A parent may have purchased a car seat on the Internet or at a yard sale. "You can't verify that a car seat has never been in an accident," Larrabee said.



Jake Larrabee of the Montpelier Fire Department holds up a child car safety seat. Larrabee is a certified child car safety seat technician. Photo by Nat Frothingham.

Any concern about child-safety-seat misuse has to be set against the bigger picture of automobile accidents and fatalities across the country. According to the Safe Kids USA website, "Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among children 3 to 14"—which underscores the seriousness of the issue of child car-seat safety.

Larrabee said that it takes about 30 minutes to complete a car-seat inspection. "We need to get the word out," he added. "It's an issue."

For further information about taking advantage of a free inspection, please call the Montpelier Fire Department at 229-4913 or the Montpelier Police Department at 223-3445.

Letters

Report Harassment on the Road

To the Editor:

To encourage bicyclists and pedestrians to report harassment by motorists, I want to share my recent personal experience. On the evening of Sunday, July 10, I was bicycling on a dirt road in Berlin. I had just passed over a stretch of rough washboard when I heard a car approaching rapidly behind me. I then heard a horrible crunching, crushing sound as the car hit the washboard, going too fast. In fear, I pulled off the road and looked over my left shoulder to see the car leave the road just behind me, tear up the turf, and rip off its rear bumper. Over the next 15 minutes, the driver pulled over as I cycled by and then passed me two more times. Once, the car came very close and the passenger screamed at me while the driver leaned on the horn. The next time, the passenger hung his naked rear end out the window.

I reported this repeated harassment to a Berlin police officer, and I was told that the same driver on the same evening had hit a mailbox and almost hit a little girl who was bicycling. The driver was cited for DUI and leaving the scene of an accident. His car was impounded, and the police had obtained a warrant to search the vehicle. They were pleased to know about the location of the car leaving the road and the debris left behind, including the foam liner of the bumper.

I gave a signed statement to the police and requested that the driver be charged with violating the safe-passing law, which took effect one year ago. I shared copies of the law and the penalties, because the officer was not aware of this law. I asked to testify in court about my unfortunate experience, and I offered to provide a training to the Berlin police department on behalf of the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition that would cover this law and much more. The officer made copies of the documents for posting and was interested in the training opportunity.

If you, while bicycling, walking, running, riding a horse, etc., on Vermont's roads, have experienced harassment from a motorist, please report what happened to you and let the police know that you would like the motorist to be cited for violating the safe-passing law. By doing so, you are assisting law enforcement and you are helping to protect others from experiencing what you experienced or worse. If you ignore this kind of behavior on the part of drivers, it will continue. Don't tolerate it. You, as the victim, are a credible witness. Please speak up and save lives! Thank you. You can find the text of the safe passing law on the home page of the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition website, vtbikeped.org.

Nancy Schulz, executive director,
Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition

Law Student Seeks Justice

To the Editor:

We have followed with great interest the story of Deanna Jones, a Vermont Law School student who is blind, and her struggle to have the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination administered in a format that is accessible to her and in a manner that would truly measure her abilities.

On the surface, this appears to be a matter of "fairness," of all students taking the same examination in the same way. When we look closely, we see that it is in reality a matter of how we value people with disabilities. There are clear precedents for allowing and encouraging alternative methods of testing. The goal of any examination is to measure the depth and breadth of content knowledge—the modality of measurement is secondary.

The Americans with Disabilities Act states, "Any private entity that offers examinations or courses related to applications, licensing, certification, or credentialing for ... professional purposes shall offer such examinations or courses in a place and manner accessible to persons with disabilities or offer alternative accessible arrangements for such individuals." The act also specifies that examinations must be "selected and administered so as to best ensure that, when the examination is administered to an individual with a disability ... the examination results accurately reflect the individual's aptitude or achievement level ... rather than reflecting the individual's impaired ... skills."

It seems obvious that Ms. Jones' request to use the same software that has aided her in her coursework and that has been part of her professional educational process should be allowed as part of the measurement of her knowledge and skills.

On Friday, July 22, at the U.S. District Courthouse in Burlington, Ms. Jones will present her case in a suit against the test administrators and examiners. It is sad that litigation is required to remedy actions that contravene the intent and requirements of the ADA, rather than civil discourse and accommodation. We encourage all interested parties to attend the hearing and lend their support to Ms. Jones.

The Vermont Center for Independent Living strongly supports her reasonable and prudent request, and we encourage and exhort the National Conference of Bar Examiners to reconsider their position.

Sarah Launderville,
executive director, VCIL

Multitalented Artist Shows Work at City Center

To the Editor:

The Great Turning: From the HomoCentric to the CosmoCentric WorldView, a digital art installation in illustration of Joanna Macy's book of the same title, is a photographic montage art exhibition now in Montpelier's City Center mounted by the multimedia artist Jerome Lipani.

Jerome gives the term "free spirit" new meaning. While on a 12-year voyage across Europe, the Middle East and India, in a quest for discovering how he might be useful in healing our planet, he has experienced things few people have. In the early time of his journey he rode horseback, with his friend Padma and a theater troupe, across Afghanistan. After four years in India, a lama scooped Jerome up where he'd long been a mendicant monk. When he reached Athens, his mother, Elia, who now lives in Montpelier, sent him passage home.

In 1981 he migrated to Montpelier. We met in 1983, and were married for 20 years. Jerome still lives in Adamant, fulfilling the promise of his youth. Multigifted, he had studied piano with a member of the New York Philharmonic from the age of five, theater and philosophy at Adelphi, dance with Martha Graham. In San Francisco, he assisted the poet Diane di Prima with her Great Bear Press. He then began playing with the Living Theatre in the U.S. and abroad, and looking into his creative process with cosmocentric and environmentally precocious artworks.

These days, among other projects, he assists Alexis Smith in her running of the Plainfield Community Center, where art installations are rotated monthly.

The focus of his art for a few years is photographic montage and working on a book of his journey. A possible closing party on August 5 may be announced, at which he would play his new music.

Tara Gita, Montpelier

A Celebration of American Singer-Songwriter Woody Guthrie at Lost Nation Theater

Next in Lost Nation Theater's summer lineup is *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, which opens on Thursday, July 28, and runs through Sunday, August 14.

In the upcoming production, three different performers will play Woody Guthrie: one as the young Woody Guthrie; another as the middle-aged Guthrie; and a third as the older Woody, toward the end of his life.

Kim Bent, who is directing the Guthrie production, paid tribute to Guthrie's talent as a songwriter who took a lot of traditional tunes and put his own words to them. Said Bent, "He really defined folk singing in our time, as someone who sang what people felt, what they wanted and needed to say."

Woody Guthrie was born in rural Oklahoma in 1912 and knew what it was to be poor. During the Dust Bowl era he joined his fellow Okies who were traveling to California looking for work.

"Addiction" is the word Bent uses to describe Guthrie's almost nomadic, on-the-move life.

"He was getting the high of what he was finding out there. He was finding the raw material that fed his creativity," said Bent.

"Deportees" is a Guthrie song that is as topical today as it was when it was written. It's about a January 28, 1948, airplane crash in Los Gatos Canyon that took the lives of 28 migrant workers who were being deported back to Mexico. But the radio and news accounts never mentioned their names. Guthrie's protest song gives back to these nameless crash victims, their identity:

*The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'ning
The oranges are piled in their creosote dumps
They're flying 'em back to the Mexico border
To take all their money to wade back again
Goodbye to my Juan, farewell Roselita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane
All they will call you will be "deportees"*

Kim Bent acknowledged the continued timeliness of "Deportees," calling it "a beautiful ballad" and protest song about the gap between rich and poor and the blighted lives of the immigrants who continue to work in our farms and fields and produce our food.

All performances of Woody Guthrie's *American Song* take place in the Montpelier's City Hall Auditorium. For further information, call 229-0492 or go online to lostnationtheater.org.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Send your letters (300 words or less, please) to nat@montpelierbridge.com by Monday, August 1, at 5 p.m.

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PROGRAM

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Syrinx for solo flute

Maurice Durufle *Prélude,
Récitatif, et Variations*, for
flute, cello, and piano, Op.3

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violin and piano No. 1 in D
minor; *Work* for solo harp,
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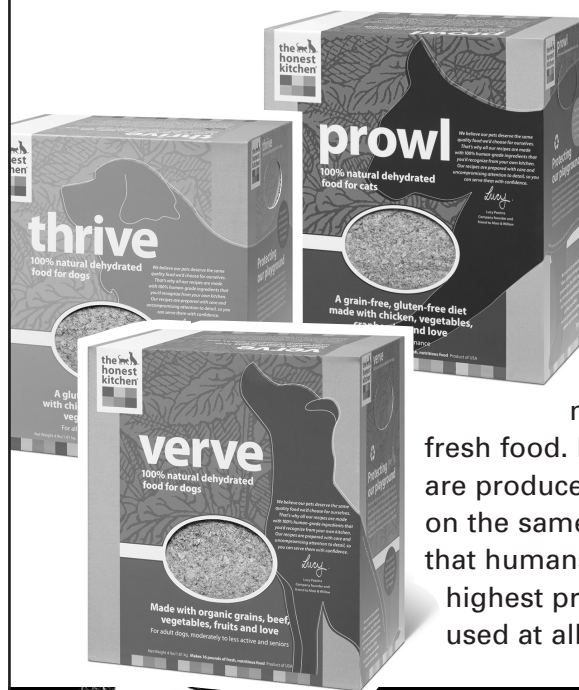
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