

The REPORTER

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State to drop masking in schools on March 14th

Area schools are
following guidance

BY ANGELO LYNN

RUTLAND COUNTY— Last week, Vermont Gov. Phil Scott announced that the state would no longer recommend that students wear masks in schools after March 14, a change in masking guidelines that included all public indoor spaces.

At a press conference March 3, state officials recommended that masks be made optional everywhere indoors — including schools — by March 14.

Area schools are among those that are adopting the optional masking protocols.

"We have had a masking mandate in place," said RNESU Superintendent. (See School masking, Page 3)

Karpak named Rowland Scholar

BRANDON — Devon Karpak, Otter Valley Union High School's Tech Ed instructor, was recently selected by the Rowland Foundation as a 2022 Rowland Fellow.

Karpak's proposal that focuses on building the OV tech program and creating an exemplar curriculum. (See Devon Karpak, Page 16)



Div. IV state champions!

THE WESTSIDER'S GOLDEN Horde girls won the Div. IV state championship game against rival Proctor this past Saturday in a thrilling back-in-forth contest at the Aud in Barre that ended, 57-56, with several missed opportunities in the final minute of play. See the story on Page 9

Photo submitted

Brandon folk artist follows life passion

BY ELSIE LYNN PARINI

BRANDON — Crossing from her home, through the breeze-way and into her barn-studio, Robin Kent doesn't even need to put on boots for her daily commute. Shoes, however, are recommended. Kent's Brandon studio is where she has crafted her folk art for the past 25 years, and the history shows.

"I have a huge mountain of shards of pieces I don't use," she said in an interview a few weeks ago. "There are hammers, screws, nails and remnants of cut outs

from the band saw all around the studio."

Kent remembered one year she participated in Open Studio Weekend. "My studio was a mess," she said happily. "I wanted people to see this as a space where someone had just stopped working to answer the door. It really is a workshop."

Yes, it's her workshop. The place that she's been creating art since she moved to Brandon a quarter century ago.

"Coming to Brandon was my change of life," she explained. "I



ROBIN KENT

was 47 years old when I landed in Brandon. Everything I held dear changed."

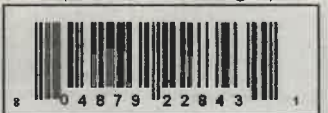
Kent was coming from a life working for a textbook publisher in Massachusetts. Before that, she had earned her college degree in art education and tried teaching — but that didn't work out. Then she helped low-income people on Cape Cod sell their art at local galleries. And then she tried her hand at commercial art, advertising and magazine production.

Though her career path was varied, her passion for art was clear.

And just as this New Jersey native knew she wasn't an urban person from the start, she also always knew she wanted to be an artist.

"I've never had the angst of 'what am I gonna do when I grow up,'" Kent said, remembering the giant piece of slate in her childhood kitchen where she would draw. "I always knew what my

(See Robin Kent, Page 7)



Sunshine week

(Continued from Page 4)

This is a reality that should concern us all. Every American should be waving the banner for government transparency. The consequences of secrecy affect not just our ability to have good-faith debates about the issues that matter most, but they also limit our ability to oversee government and the work it does on our behalf. When it comes to transparency, we're all stakeholders.

So, here are a few things we can do to honor Sunshine Week:

- Contact your state representative to discuss strengthening your respective public records and open meeting laws. For example, many states are now considering changes to allow remote participation during government meetings. Be a part of the effort to make access to government easier and more equitable for all Americans.

- Support your local newsroom. Journalists are often the most frequent filers of public records requests. They are typically at the frontlines of obtaining government information despite newsroom budget cuts and inadequate resources. Subscribe to your news source of choice

and be kind to those seeking out information on your behalf.

- Make a public records request. Not sure how? Visit nefac.org/foiguide for video tutorials. Take advantage of your right to know by requesting information about issues that mean the most to you. Then take that information and engage in fact-based conversations with those in your community.

"Thoughtful debate about serious issues is central to our democracy," wrote the authors of the Annenberg study. "But solving real problems is impossible when every issue is viewed through a distorted lens that is often informed by sources who create their own facts to further their own power."

Sunshine laws are integral to thoughtful debate. They can provide us the knowledge needed to form opinions about what's best for this country and how well our government is leading the way. But those laws need to be protected and strengthened. That's something we can all agree on.

Justin Silverman is executive director of the New England First Amendment Coalition. Learn more about the coalition's work at nefac.org.

Devon Karpak

(Continued from Page 1)

riculum and program for a CTE connected pathway for grades 7 through 12, was chosen for this honor and will be supported by the Rowland Foundation both financially and with professional development.

All too often there is a barrier of time to bring ideas to fruition. The Rowland Fellowship allows for schools to create time by awarding each of the fellows up to \$100,000, which can be used to hire additional personnel, meet the needs of implementation of programs for students, as well as travel and time to reflect for the Rowland Fellow instructor.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and a transformative experience for students, schools and educators alike, said RNE-SU Supt. Jeanne Collins.

Karpak's proposal to build out the school's tech program was chosen for its unique nature. Schools like OV do not currently have opportunities for students in 7th through 10th grade for students to explore careers and take Pre-Tech courses. Otter Valley has been



DEVON KARPAK

lucky enough to have kept their woodshop program active when many other schools are cutting similar programs. In fact, over the past three years Karpak, OVUHS Principal James Avery, with the support of Collins and the OVU school board have worked to expand the program from primarily wood working to new offerings in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM), and heavy equipment operation (in partnership with Markowski Excavating).

Planned programs to imple-

ment next year and in the near future include building trades with small engines (grant funded from through FFA) and welding in the very near future (spurred on by a grant from the American Welding Society).

Karpak's vision is for the tech-ed program to empower students to create and connect in ways that will enable them to see a direct path to their futures and bring additional meaning and relevance to their high school careers. Additionally, he hopes to build further community partnerships that will help students see that Vermont is a great place to grow up and build a life.

Karpak plans to partner with local manufacturers and employers to assist in fully realizing this community-built program.

Finally, Karpak looks forward to not only continuing to build the program during school hours but to also open up the shop to the community. "This is an amazing opportunity for OV," said Collins, adding that Karpak is ready to work to get students further engaged.

Addison County's Hometown Dealer



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