

New Brook News

A biannual newsletter by and for the people of Brookline, Newfane Village, South Newfane, and Williamsville, Vermont

A project of the Newfane Anew Community Volunteer Association • Spring & Summer Issue • June 2025

New Museum Offers Greater View on Windham County History

By Katie Murtaugh

On May 31st, a day of relentless downpours, the weather cleared just in time for the opening celebration of the new Windham County History Museum. Housed in the 1825 County Jail building, it's the culmination of two and a half years of work by members of the Historical Society, led by Richard Marek. A buzz of excitement was in the air as speeches were given, the ribbon was cut, and dozens of people filed in to view the new space. I was captured by a nostalgic feeling as we paused to enjoy old-timey tunes played by the Grafton Cornet Band.

Inside, there's something of interest for everyone. My seven year old daughter gravitated toward the school exhibit. Seeing the formal teacher's desk with its brass bell juxtaposed against the rickety pupils' bench, one can easily imagine what schooldays were like. Photos of serious-faced children standing barefoot in front of one-room schoolhouses bring to mind



the phrase “walked five miles in a blizzard.”

Exhibits unfurl their stories through captivating memorabilia, photographs, and accompanying narratives. In the main room, an enormous wagon wheel sits beneath a three-part display: “the journey by rail, river, and road,” which brims with fascinating insights on early transportation.

See MUSEUM on page 4



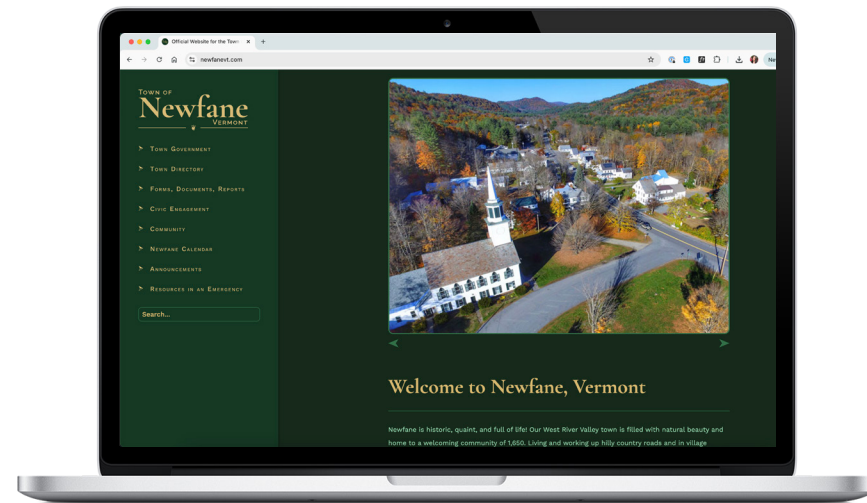
Your Voice, Your Town: Newfane Wants Your Ideas

By Jane Douglas

Every seven years, we update the town plan for the Town of Newfane. The next update is due for 2026, so the town's Planning Commission is undertaking the task of reviewing our town plan and bringing it up to date with all the current state requirements.

We'll be holding several informational meetings in the next few months, looking for input from our town residents. What would you like to see happen in our community in the next few years? More building? Less building? New businesses? New residences? Bigger roads? Narrower roads?

It's your chance to make your opinion known, and to help set the direction our town takes into the future. Keep an eye out for those meetings!



Newfane Has a New Website!

The shiny new site has all the reliable information from the old website– like Selectboard meetings and Town Office hours– plus these new and updated features:

- Ways to get involved with local government and volunteering (see the Civic Engagement page)
- More FAQs about Town Office services– like how to post land or obtain a zoning permit
- A list of current road projects (see the Roads Office page)
- Updated forms & reports– like the Union Hall Rental

Request form

- A comprehensive directory of Newfane businesses (email the Town Clerk to add or edit yours)
- A catalog of area events and things to do– such as recreation spots and family activities
- A guide for newcomers– including services providers, ways to connect with neighbors, and plenty of seasonal considerations
- Resources for area families, seniors, and more
- An event calendar (email the Town Clerk to add your event!)



The Friends of the Moore Free Library
invite you to their summer

BOOK SALE

23 West Street, Newfane
Saturday, July 19
9 am to 2 pm

For more information
julielavorgna@gmail.com
or 802-365-7948

Around Brookline

By Dan Towler

Changing of the Guard in Brookline

It may seem that nothing much changes in Brookline, but 2025, in fact, has ushered in a host of changes to the personnel in charge of keeping the town functioning. Guy Tanza, Town Clerk since 2011, has decided that 80 is old enough to retire, and his wife, Gwen, heretofore Assistant Town Clerk, of uncertain age, has decided to retire along with Guy. The new Town Clerk is Marjorie Ray. Just added to the staff is Morah Chowning, who will be Assistant Town Clerk.

Dot Maggio, long-time Chair of the Select Board, Brookline's #1 booster and super-volunteer, has also decided to take a step back from municipal duties. Stan Noga, Jr. has also stepped off the Select Board, though both he and Dot continue to hold many volunteer elected and appointed positions. Two new Select Board members are the estimable Everett "Mark" Bills, long-time highway supervisor, and a newcomer to Town office, Emily Beer, who moved to Brookline recently and was attending her first Town

Meeting and decided to raise her hand and volunteer to fill the vacant post on the Select Board. From all accounts, she has been a great addition to the Board. The new Chair of the Select Board is Mike DeSocio, and also continuing on the Board are Doug Wellman and Bruce Mello.

Speaking of Mark Bills, in addition to his job keeping the town's roads safe, he is now a movie star, with a supporting role in the new documentary "Bills Lumber", filmed by Theresa Maggio (sister of Dot). The hour long movie tells the story of the lumber yard founded in Wardsboro by Mark's grandfather in the 1930's, which was in continuous operation until 2023, most recently run by Mark's father and uncle, Everett and Alan Bills, with help from Mark. The documentary is a spectacular slice of local history and has been filling community halls and movie houses all over Windham County since its premiere on January 4 at Williamsville Hall.

What's new at the Brookline Meetinghouse
The Brookline Meetinghouse Committee, like the Select Board, has had some turnover,



with long-time members Lee Anne Parker, Kerry Bourne, and Dan Towler deciding to pass the baton, along with Julia and Stuart Duke. Still on the Committee are Jon Ballou, Fran and Tim Carr, and Julie Roach. The Committee held their annual plant sale on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, raising \$1,600 towards the ongoing restoration of the old church. Earlier in May, a group of local musicians, Happy Valley Sessions, played an evening of Irish music to a sizable audience. The third annual Town Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, August 23.

A forum to ask questions of our local legislators, Reps. Leslie Goldman and Michelle Bos-Lun and Senators Wendy Harrison and Nader Hashim, is scheduled for mid-June. They do these meetings regularly in Bellows Falls, but residents in Brookline have expressed a desire for at least one forum a year here. So, this is our chance to find out



what they've been up to in the Legislature and air our concerns. The one held a year ago at the Meetinghouse was very well-attended and informative.

Town Building Commissioner Bruce Mello has ambitious plans to renovate the 1890's annex to make it suitable for year-round events as well as ADA accessible. These plans include window restoration, insulation, restoring the entry and adding a ramp, widening interior doorways, upgrading the bathroom, and a complete paint job, most of which is subject to the success of a grant from the Vermont *See BROOKLINE on page 5*



MUSEUM continued from page 1

I'd never laid eyes on a snow roller before, and it's really something! There's also a massive display of indigenous arrows and spearheads; a couple dating back to 8000 BP! It's a joy to see this collection from the 1890s, which, due to lack of space, had been stored in the former museum's basement.

Being relative newcomers to the area, the museum has allowed my family to deepen our connection to this historically-rich place. The many items on display paint a picture of everyday life back then: the medical remedies & implements, embroidery samplers, spinning wheels, and giant potash kettle out front are just a few. We were engrossed by the photography gallery, with its early silhouette



portraits, daguerreotypes, and devices for viewing photos in 3 dimensions. The 1862 Venetian-made Megaethoscope shows the lengths those 1800s Vermonters would go to enjoy new photographic technologies.

And then there's the actual jail ... The story goes, prisoners were served hotel-quality food (since the jail famously had a hotel wing), and were treated rather kindly by locals (some of their letters asking for beer and cigarettes are on display). But once inside the old cells, you realize spending any amount of time here wouldn't be much of a vacation. It's dark, cramped and the pit toilet is none too inviting. There's also an enthralling feature on the county's most notorious bandits. The tale of a doctor whose



scars found posthumously matched the description of an infamous highwayman sounds like something straight out of an old western!

My family is already looking forward to our next visit to the new History Museum since we'd like to spend more time in the new art gallery with its rotating collection and the fascinating military exhibit. And we're told there will be more things to research and discover as society volunteers, led by Curator Laura Paris, work to digitize the records and add even more historical context to the artifacts. But after visiting for the opening, I can definitely see why the Historical Society was eager to make the big move. There's so much more local history to take in, and experiencing the old jail is the icing on the cake!

Check Out the Renovations at the Moore Free Library

By Beckley Gaudette,
Library Director

In 2023 the Moore Free Library celebrated its 125-year anniversary. The building is always in need of updates and repairs. This year has been no different. In November 2024 we realized we had a problem with our septic system. The repair would require a new design and permit from the State. Once we had that in hand the project moved forward through the efforts of

Michael Marquise, A.S. Clark & Sons, Jeffers Plumbing, and Scott Amsden.

The front porch of the library had been in need of repair for several years. Brunelle Construction made our entrance once again safe and beautiful. Amramp installed a temporary ramp to the side door to keep us open while the porch was being renovated.

Both projects were made



possible by generous donations from our community, from the Robert L. Crowell Charitable Trust, and from ARPA allocations from both Newfane and Brookline.

Thanks are also due to the

Friends of the Library who fund Mona Severance's lovely expert gardening in front of the building. Last, but certainly not least, we are grateful to our patrons for their patience and understanding during the improvements.

BROOKLINE continued from page 3

Arts Council. Also on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend was Brookline's second annual Town-Wide Yard Sale, organized by Alyssa Schmidt. Residents were encouraged to hold yard sales on that day, with a map printed up showing visitors where to look for cheap used goodies. This year featured 10 yard

sales, fewer than last year, but enough to make it all worthwhile. **An addition to the historic landmarks in Brookline** Move over, Round Schoolhouse, Baptist Church, and Iron Bridge 19. Brookline has another heretofore little-known historic structure in its midst. Though residents have driven over it thousands of times, most probably had no idea what

they were driving over. Underneath Hill Road right at the junction with Kirsch Road is a small stone arch bridge, likely built between 1890 and 1910, at least partially by James Otis Follett, a Civil War veteran who built around 40 stone arch bridges in the area. Follett was a Townshend resident, and of the bridges known to have been built by him that remain, 6 are in Townshend, 3 are in Putney, and the one in Brookline. The Townshend Historical Society spearheaded an effort to preserve and restore the bridges in Townshend, and their website has lots of information on the bridges and on Follett.

An application has been made to FEMA for a grant

to replace the bridge in Brookline, but its status is uncertain. Meanwhile, a group of residents are banding together to try to build consensus for saving the stone arch bridge. The group includes Roger Allbee, who grew up in Brookline right next to the bridge and whose dad was the Road Commissioner in the 1960's when it was added onto. A meeting was held recently in the former Brookline Elementary School to gauge public sentiment about saving vs. replacing the bridge. It drew close to 30 residents, at least half of whom seemed to favor preserving the bridge. Keeping it safe for traffic and safe from flood damage were things everyone was agreed on.



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Something New in Newfane

Three Fresh Spots to Discover

By Jillian Williams

Three new or newly reopened businesses are bringing fresh life to our village center. Whether you're curious about Vermont-grown cannabis at Green Peak Dispensary, eager to enjoy dinner and live music at the revamped Four Columns Inn, or drawn to the smells of Indian cuisine at Willow A Vermont Retreat, there's never been a better time to explore what's blooming in Newfane. We checked in with the folks behind each to learn more.

Green Peak Dispensary

Tucked into a familiar and historic building in the heart of Newfane, Green Peak Dispensary opened

its doors on December 19 with a mission to offer high-quality, locally sourced cannabis in a warm, welcoming space.

Green Peak thoughtfully preserved the building's legacy during renovations, keeping key details like the original 1890s bar and the carved wood mantle in the dining room. "People come in and say, 'This was my spot at the bar!'—there's so much history here," says co-owner Jason Freeman.

The shop sources much of its inventory from cultivators within 15–20 miles, keeping things local whenever possible. In turn, locals have embraced the dispensary — from longtime residents to curious

newcomers, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. "The community has been incredibly accepting and supportive," Jason says. "We can't thank them enough."

Be on the lookout for the next delicious chapter—Green Peak is cooking up plans for takeout pizza and more, all served from the same historic spot.

To learn more or shop online, visit greenpeakdispensaryvt.com.

Willow — A Vermont Retreat

Tucked into the heart of South Newfane, Willow is part artist retreat, part community hub—and home to Ravi's Indian Takeout,

a wildly popular pop-up dinner series that's been quietly selling out since it began nearly a year ago.

Run out of the inn's kitchen on select Saturdays, Ravi's menu always features one meat and one vegetarian dish, made entirely from scratch with family recipes and hand-roasted spices—some brought straight from India by Ravi's mother. "Nothing is store-bought," Ravi explains. "These are the flavors I grew up with, and now I get to share them with the community."

Orders open the Sunday before each meal and can be placed through Willow's website, with pickup happening Saturday afternoon.

In addition to the takeout offerings, Willow hosts seasonal art retreats and workshops, and will once again transform its entire first floor into a gallery for its third annual art exhibition this August. The show features over 100 classical realist works by more than 40 artists from the Grand Central Atelier in Brooklyn, NY.

Whether you're there for the food, the art, or the peaceful energy of the place itself, Willow is a remarkable example of what happens when creativity, culture, and community come together. To pre-order takeout or learn more about upcoming events, visit www.willowvt.com.

Four Columns Inn & 1832 Tavern

After years of ups and downs, the historic Four Columns Inn in the

heart of Newfane is open once again—welcoming both overnight guests and hungry locals with a fresh new take on its beloved restaurant and inn.

The newly revamped 1832 Tavern is serving dinner six nights a week (closed Wednesdays). Hotel Manager Bridget Tweedy, a Newfane resident, says the community response has been overwhelmingly positive.

"I've seen so many familiar faces coming through—it's been wonderful," she says. "We all love the Crow and the General Store, but it's really exciting to have another option again."

The team celebrated their official grand opening this spring with a community cookout, complete with live music, yard games, and face painting, drawing around 200 guests. Since then, the momentum has continued, with live music every Friday and Saturday night, Thursday turkey dinners, and plans in the works for weekly specials like burger nights, pizza nights, and possibly karaoke or trivia.

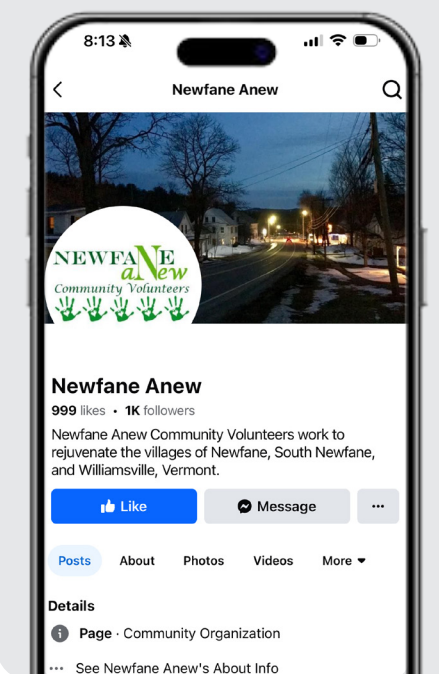
The Four Columns Inn is open for dinner every night except Wednesday, and rooms can be booked any day of the week. Locals are encouraged to stop in, check out the live music, or even just enjoy an appetizer on the patio.

For menus, hours, and updates, visit fourcolumnsvt.com or stop by in person.

STAY UP TO DATE

Stay up to date with Newfane Anew and their inspiring work to rejuvenate the villages of Newfane, South Newfane, and Williamsville, Vermont!

Newfane Anew Community Volunteers are dedicated to fostering a vibrant, connected, and thriving community through local events, beautification projects, and collaborative initiatives. Follow along to see how they're making a difference in our community!



Let the Good Times Continue to Roll with Music at Union Hall



2025 Schedule

- Sat June 14
Three Folk Duos: Bard Owl, Cucumber Band, Demolition String Band
- Sat July 12
Classic Covers with Steep Way, plus Jazz Fusion with Electric Wire
- Sat Aug 2
Local Talent Showcase: Rock Hits from the 60s through the 90s
- Sat Sept 6
Special Show: Processed solo guitar with Roger Clark Miller and Mythless
- Sat Sept 13 TBD
- Sat Oct 18
Speed Dial 9/Dead Guy Fashion
- Sat Nov 8
Rear Defrosters, Picket Fence
- Sat Dec 13 TBD

Local live music is still going strong each month at Union Hall! As shared in a previous NewBrook News article, Newfane residents David Hull and Greg LoPiccolo began working with Newfane Anew (the community volunteer group) in 2023 to explore showcasing local music in the hall and the reception has been strong from the community. With professional sound and lighting installed thanks to a generous grant supplied by the town the hall is not only a beautiful space but also a well-equipped place for performances. Since the first show in April 2024, the program has hosted a variety of different musical genres including folk, bluegrass, rock, and Americana, as well as some unique shows that defy easy categorization. Greg LoPiccolo commented, "It is astonishing how much musical talent there is in this community, and we have been blown away by the amount of support and engagement we have gotten."

Shows are open to all, but donations are encouraged and

appreciated. In the summer months, the program moves out to the courthouse green and shows start in mid-afternoon - a perfect pastime for a summer Saturday. In addition, the hall is now available for any residents to book for independent concerts and functions, with sound and lighting support available at an additional fee.

In the spring of 2025 the Music at Union Hall started a new initiative: a community jam for musicians who want to play live, but aren't part of an existing band. With rehearsals every other Thursday, an eclectic group of local musicians has formed to work on classic rock songs - and they will be putting on a show on the courthouse green in August. Newfane Anew continues to explore other opportunities to showcase the talent of the Newfane community. "This hall is an incredible resource, and it's gratifying to see it being used by our community in such creative ways," said LoPiccolo.



Your Support Helps Our Seniors Thrive

Thank you to the generous residents of Brookline and Newfane. Yet again, you have shown your support for Senior Solutions. I am the Executive Director for Senior Solutions, and it is heartwarming to see your commitment to our aging neighbors and family members.

For over 50 years, Senior Solutions has been a trusted partner in providing guidance, support, and advocacy for older adults and their caregivers in southeastern Vermont. The funding approved by Brookline and Newfane voters will help us continue offering vital services such as those we provided in 2024, including our HelpLine (802-885-2669 or 866-673-8376), our State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), in-home case management or other home-based assistance, nutritious home-delivered or congregate meals, volunteer services,

caregiver support, transportation, wellness and fall prevention programs, options counseling, legal assistance (through Vermont Legal Aid), assistance for adults with disabilities, pet care support, and home-based mental health services.

Vermont is one of the oldest states in the country, and it is expected that one in three Vermonters will be over the age of 60 by 2030. The approval of this funding highlights the dedication that Brookline and Newfane residents have for building a community where people of all ages can thrive. Senior Solutions looks forward to continuing our work in Vermont and ensuring that every older adult has the support they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Warm regards,
Mark Boutwell

NEWCOMERS MIXER AT RIVER & RYE
WED, JULY 30, 5PM-7PM

You wouldn't believe how many newcomers there are to Jamaica, Townshend, Newfane and beyond -- including many young professionals and families. Come meet new neighbors and friends and experience how vibrant small-town Vermont community can be! Appetizers will be provided by River & Rye's new restaurateurs;

a cash bar will also be available. Children are quite welcome -- there is plenty of outdoor space to play! RSVP at sovermont.com/newcomers-mixers/ for contact info ... or just come.

This mixer is sponsored by GROW SoVermont, a program to welcome new and returning Vermonters to the area.

Visit sovermont.com/grow to learn more!

Tell Your Stress to Hit the Road!

From Jen Frey, Mover at Village Yoga in Newfane

Let's face it—stress and worry love to crash the party. Whether it's a wild to-do list, a tough conversation, or just the daily news, we all get that "overwhelmed" feeling sometimes. But guess what? You don't have to let stress stick around! One of the best ways to show it the door is simple: get moving!

When stress shows up, your body flips on its "fight or flight" switch, flooding you with hormones that make you feel jumpy or worn out. An ancient mechanism in a modern world. Our current challenges require patience, problem-solving, or calm communication and not the adrenaline or cortisol to outrun your predator. Without that physical outlet, those stress hormones linger, making you feel tense, jittery, or even exhausted.

So, make moving a stress habit! Go for a stroll, do some chores, stretch like (or with) your cat or turn up the music and dance like nobody's watching. When you feel the pressure make the move.



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NewBrook Celebrates its 10th Farm & Field Day

By Katie Murtaugh

Not every school puts the “farm” in field day, but NewBrook Elementary’s Farm to School program culminates with this fun outdoor event each year. Ten years ago at the first Farm & Field Day, then-coordinator Heather Sperling led students to construct an earth oven out of foot- stomped mud bricks. A decade later, that oven still bakes mighty tasty pizzas the kids enjoy alongside bike-blended smoothies. What a treat!

Throughout the school year, Amy Duffy, the current program coordinator, teaches students about growing and raising healthy food– learning that is made even more compelling by this event. Farm & Field Day shows the myriad ways people can take part in Vermont’s local food and sustainability movement. This year there were stations covering subjects like mushroom foraging, fiber arts, pollinators, and rabbit farming. Students got to participate in a waste sorting relay put on by WSWMD, pet a sweet natured therapy dog (Monadnock Therapy Pets), and make deviled eggs (featuring the Food Connects’ harvest of the month: eggs).

On a sunny May day, I headed over to Farm & Field Day, not realizing I was about to learn as much as the children. The Giant Journey Farmers shared their big bunnies and fascinating facts about rabbit meat: who knew it’s one of the most sustainable, protein-rich, and easily digestible animal products? Chris Dennette, leader of local foraging



Farm & Field Day Fun! From bike-blended smoothies to rabbit farming and mushroom foraging, NewBrook Elementary’s annual Farm & Field Day brings Vermont’s local food and sustainability movement to life.

outings, displayed a diverse collection of mushrooms and animal skulls. From him we learned that white tailed deer with a nutritious diet develop more bumps on their antlers– his lumpy rack a testament to our healthy deer population. Shiloh the Serendipetous Sherpardess, sat at her spinning wheel, goat at her side, and spoke about processing wool into garments. We found out that anything– even human hair– can be turned into a sweater!

Big thanks to NewBrook Elementary School’s staff, the Farm to School Committee, and Field Day station leaders for teaching our kids about these important topics.



Locally Flavored Jokes for Kids of All Ages

By Fern & Family

Q: How did the apple get to school?

A: She rode her pie-cycle!

Q: What did the Vermonter say to the bridge who was scared of rain & snow?

A: Don’t worry, I’ve got you covered!

Q: Why did the maple trees get married?

A: So they will live sappily ever after!

Q: Why is Vermont cheese so tasty?

A: It’s “cheddar” than the rest!

Q: What’s the loudest water in NewBrook?

A: The ROCK River!

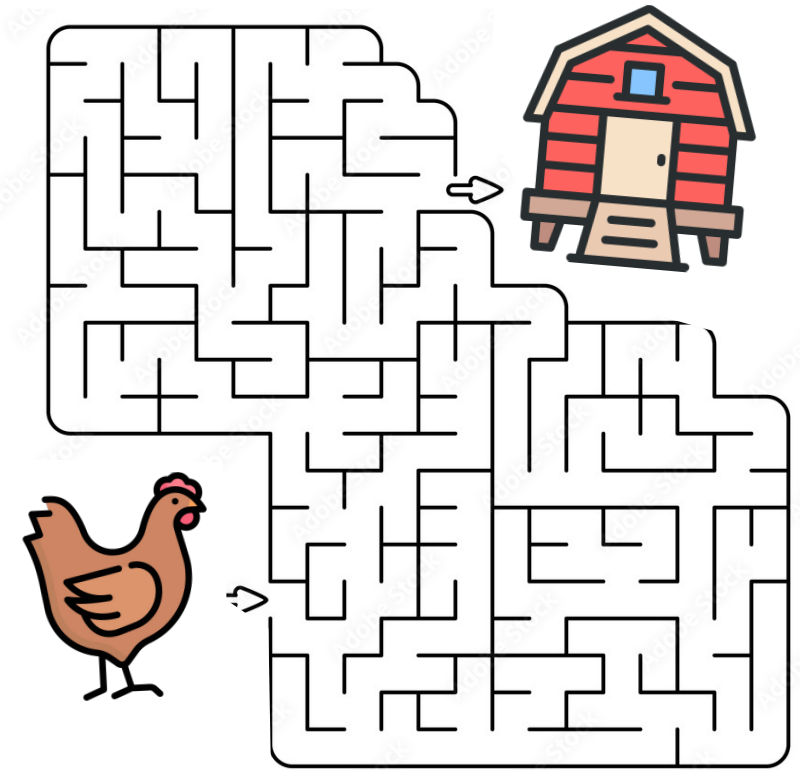
Q: What has a hole in it, but still holds water?

A: A swimming hole!

Q: What is a bear’s favorite dessert?

A: Straw-BEARY rhubarb pie!

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F L O W S T A T E

Opening Reception
Sunday August 24, 1-6pm



Raise Up! For the past 10 years Newfane Anew Community Volunteers have hung the American flags along Route 30 in Newfane. The happy flag crew consists of Jen Frey, Dave Jones, and Ken Schatra.



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