

## Heroism as a governing principal

There is nothing like the the fearsome and unyielding force of Nature to remind the humble human race of their relatively small size and power. The flash floods that ripped through The Valley last weekend were a reminder that Mother Nature rules and we exist at her discretion.

But as powerful as Nature is, it cannot and did not conquer the human desire to help a friend, neighbor or stranger in need.

"We are the planet fully as much as its water, earth, fire and air are the planet and if the planet survives, it will only be through heroism. Not occasional heroism, a remarkable instance of it here, there, but constant heroism, systematic heroism, heroism as governing principal, wrote Russell Banks, in *Continental Drift*.

Local acts of heroism were abundant and evident during the early morning hours of June 27 and in the days that followed.

Can there be any greater heroes than the firefighters and ambulance service members who hurried to their posts to see if their neighbors and Valley visitors were safe and needed help?

And how about the people, who are members of neither emergency service, but got up and offered help, transportation, coffee, phones and other assistance from the early morning hours on? They're heroes too.

Hero status must also go to those who stood hour after hour at various road closure junctions patiently explaining what was going on and re-routing people around the flooding.

The acts of heroism weren't limited to locals either. Certainly the rescue crews who hastened to Warren where people were stranded in trees and houses deserve mention, as do the State Police officers, and sheriff's deputies who arrived early and stayed late.

While many complain that the wheels of the state and federal bureaucracies turn slowly, one can't complain about the speed with which Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and FEMA personnel got to The Valley to help with clean up decisions and financial assistance. Those people are more than paper pushing bureaucrats who slow up permits. They were heroes too, doing their best to help the residents of The Valley get back on their collective feet.

And to everyone else in The Valley, to the heavy equipment operators who still haven't slept because so many roads, and yards still need to be fixed, to the businesses donating time and equipment, to the individuals offering a helping hand or a hug to their neighbors, to those sweeping the streets and picking up debris, thank you, you're all heroes and you make the world a better place. Out of town visitors, stranded in Moretown during the height of the flood commented not about the water, but a community of people helping each other through crisis-heroism as a governing principal.

## Letters

### Learned two lessons

To The Editor:

Many people have inquired about our daughter Cait's bicycle after you published our letter explaining the situation to the community. Cait received several phone calls with offers of used bikes and money. Many people stopped her in town to say they were sorry her bike was stolen. She did not accept any of the offers, but felt better when she learned that people cared.

Our daughter learned two lessons. First, sometimes people make bad choices that negatively affect other people. Secondly, she learned that there are so many people in our community who want to make our world a better place and right the wrongs that sometimes happen. We can't name all of the people who have shown kindness to our daughter, but we want to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. The Mad River Valley is truly a special place to raise a family.

Cait is happily riding a new ten-speed bike she bought with gift money she'd been saving since last fall. She learned two lessons that will stay with her for a lifetime.

Brenda and David  
Hartshorn  
Waitsfield

### Step back and take stock

It always seems it takes some kind of overwhelming event to make us take a breath, step back and take stock. From the early hours of Saturday morning, volunteers were watching the river. As events changed rapidly, these wonderful folks were detouring us from roads and bridges washed out, turning off the gas and securing gas tanks, warning our friends and neighbors, and then evacuat-

ing folks to safer ground.

Immediately, as the flood waters began to subside, these very exhausted men and women brought out the generators and then pumped out our flooded foundations, had emergency shelters and food at the schools, fielded dozens of phone calls from concerned friends and neighbors; were very generous with the hugs we needed first when we discovered it could have been worse or when we discovered it was much more than we first thought.

We heard, "Oh well, it could have been worse!" And believe me we did need to hear that and say that and believe that. It was much worse for many of our business neighbors right here on Bridge Street and for homeowners all over The Valley and beyond. We just want you all to know we love you all—our hearts go out for your losses—we will help each other get through this mess.

To all the wonderful owners of Waitsfield Village businesses, your resolve in dealing with this disaster was inspirational. Thank you to the scores of friends who came to see what they could do and without being asked, pitched right in salvaging whatever was possible from the flood waters and helping during the clean up afterwards. Thank you to all the volunteers who can handle any emergency with patience, understanding and a hug.

Thanks also to Bill Pring, the good folks at F.G. White, again the Waitsfield Fire Department and Mad River Valley Ambulance crews, the Labor and Industry folks for coming on a Sunday (with Bernie Sweet) so that we could get our power restored as quickly as possible at the Elm House. Thank you, Bernie! Thanks to all the folks who came to see what they could do even when they were hurt by the flood themselves: our neighbors/our

customers/our friends.

Special thanks to Russ Bennett of NorthLand Construction who being there so soon on Saturday morning, checking out the damage on Sunday and having a crew at the Eaton House on Monday; to Don Pierce of Middlesex Electric for coming to our aid both on Saturday and building us a driveway first thing Sunday morning (thank you Dick, Laura and Mike).

Thank you Dawn Moriarty for being the special person you are, alerting all the Bridge Street neighbors so they could get to their shops early Saturday morning and save what they could and for being optimistic and helpful and supportive when things looked their worst. We are privileged to know you all.

What an insignificant word "thank you" can be. When my family moved to this beautiful Valley 30 years ago, it was like coming home; and this weekend our hearts have been overflowing with gratitude to our neighbors who were there to do what was needed to be done and who understood how really overwhelmed we all were. Gaelic and I personally have too many people to thank, especially our newfound McTigue relative (thank you). For a short time All Things Bright and Beautiful will be in one building; but all the huggable bears, etc. are safe and sound and just waiting for you to come and see them again.

Please stop by our Christmas Shop and we can get any wonderful stuffed animal you may want from the teddy bear shop. The Beanie Babies are happy with all the European glass ornaments. Stop by for the other kind of hug, too, we appreciate it!

Irene, Bonnie  
and Gaelic McTigue  
Treetop Christmas Shop  
All Things Bright  
and Beautiful  
Waitsfield

## Valley Viewpoint

How do the new Vermont standards affect teaching in the Mad River Valley? (Asked of educators attending Washington West Supervisory Union's Summer Institute.)



Lee Van Dine, Waitsfield

"The new standards are setting the stage for the future of education in Vermont which is being determined from the bottom up."



Kathy Orr, Moretown

"We're now forced to look at the data to determine just what our students are learning."



Roberta Barone, Middlesex

"We must now produce evidence of learning. Kids are being compared with the standards, not other kids as they are with most standardized testing."

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