



It Takes a Village...Newsletter

No. 9 /June 2021

‘The Summertime Issue’



Jude, age 1, Rockaways Beach,
in Queens, NY.

Photo: Meg Bogdan

Umm mmm, summertime. Time for popsicles, flip flops, swimming holes, beach bumming, campfires, baseball, roller coasters, s’mores, cocktails on the veranda ...*You* know the joys of the season. And you’ve likely got some wonderful memories of your own of summers past. Maybe more to come at VHC?

This newsletter issue is devoted to hot-weather pursuits, with information about things to do in and around Northampton and Pioneer Valley. Other topics are addressed as well. So guzzle that margarita and slop on more sunscreen. But first, to get in the mood, check out this suggested summertime playlist:

[*Summer in the City*](#), Lovin’ Spoonful

[*Dancing in the Streets*](#), Martha and the Vandellas

[*Under the Boardwalk*](#), The Drifters

[*California Girls*](#), The Beach Boys

[*Hot Fun in the Summertime*](#), Sly & the Family Stone

A VHC Member's Fave Summer Places: What You Need to Know

Curated by Freja Jolson

Swimmin' Holes!

Musante Beach



Location: 85 Reservoir Rd, Leeds

Description: Run by the City of Northampton, Musante Beach is a very nearby, small, yet enjoyable place to spend a summer day. It will be open weekends only from Memorial Day to June 19 and then daily from June 19 through Labor Day. There are various fee levels for residents of Northampton and non-residents. Memberships are available

for residents of Northampton, Florence and Leeds.

COVID Restrictions: All patrons **MUST** follow State and Local guidelines regarding physical distancing and wearing face masks when not swimming. You will need to stay in your spot unless you are going into the water, to the bathroom, or leaving the beach.

- To guarantee a beach spot, beach spot reservations should be made online prior to arrival. Same day reservations need to be made before 9 am.
- You may arrive or leave anytime during your designated time slot. Maintain proper physical distancing when arriving and unloading your personal belongings. Proceed directly to the check in table, show your reservation receipt, (via cell phone or a printed copy) and staff will show you to your designated spot. Once you vacate your spot, there is no re-entry.

Source: [Northampton city website/Musante Beach page](#)

Puffer's Pond



Location: Mill Street, Amherst

Description: Located about 3 miles north of the town center, Puffer's Pond is a lovely recreation area for fishing, birding, nature walking, canoeing, picnicking and swimming. Puffer's Pond hours are from 6:00am until dusk. It is run by the Town of Amherst, but there is no entrance fee and no lifeguard on duty.

Source: [Amherst city website/Puffer's Pond page](https://www.amherstcity.com/puffer-pond)

D.A.R. State Forest



Location: 78 Cape St, Goshen, MA

Description: This state forest offers dozens of campsites, forest trails, a lake to swim and fish in. It is open sunrise to sunset and parking is \$8 for MA residents. There are changing rooms, showers, and lifeguards. According to their website, they have wheelchair accessible camping, fishing pier,

hiking trail, and a beach wheelchair, however, the accessible bathrooms and picnic areas are closed.

COVID Restrictions: Not listed

Photo: Department of Conservation and Recreation

Source: [Massachusetts Government website/D.A.R. State Forest page](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dar-state-forest)

Lake Wyola State Park



Location: 94 Lakeview Rd, Shutesbury

Description: Lake Wyola State Park is located in the quaint hill town of Shutesbury, just north of Amherst.

Open Memorial Day to Labor Day, daily from 9:00am-7:30pm. They have an accessible boardwalk that allows wheelchair access to the

water. You can kayak and canoe, have a picnic or grill, swim and hike. Parking is \$8 for MA residents.

COVID Restrictions: Not listed

Photo: John Phelan Wikimedia Commons

Source: [Massachusetts Government website/Lake Wyola State Park page](#)

River Fun!



Photo: Bob Adams



The Deerfield River

Description: The Deerfield River, located in Charlemont, offers a range of activities for the adventurous. You can take kayaking and whitewater rafting lessons or guided group trips with private companies like Zoar Outdoor, Crab Apple Whitewater and Berkshire Whitewater kayaking -- or you can rent tubes and spend a lazy afternoon tubing down the river.

Freja Jolson. Photo: Randall Smith

Summer Tobogganing



Photo: Berkshireeast.com

[Berkshire East](#), the ski mountain in Charlemont has many summer activities: You can ride the Mountain Coaster, a summer toboggan that takes you through the woods. All ages can ride, but the driver must be at least 9 years old. One ride is \$12 for kids, \$20 for adults. Also offered: incredible zipline canopy tours, mountain biking, and hiking.

COVID Restrictions: Not listed

The Montague Book Mill



[The Montague Book Mill](#) is a used-books store housed in a historic 1842 gristmill, set on the banks of the Sawmill River, in Montague. Its tagline is “Books you don’t need in a place you can’t find.” The Mill, which is open Thursday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. is also home to Sawmill River Arts and a music store called Turn It Up! Call to

find out the status of the mill’s food and drink service at the Lady Killigrew Cafe, overlooking the river. Downstairs is the Alvah Stone Restaurant and Bar, with a gorgeous deck. Concerts and performances have been presented in the past, in spring, summer and fall. The Book Mill is a place to lose yourself for hours.

COVID restrictions: Not listed

Hiking



Long Mountain, in Granby

Photo: Deborah Schifter

The Mount Tom State Reservation

Location: Holyoke

Description: The [Mount Tom State Reservation](#) offers 22 acres of trails with a lovely view of the Valley and excellent opportunities for bird-watching. Parking is \$5 for Massachusetts residents. Open sunrise to sunset.

The Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation

Location: South Deerfield

Description: The summit at [Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation](#) offers amazing views of the Connecticut River Valley. The park is great for picnics, hiking, and mountain biking. You can walk up the trails or drive to the summit and have a picnic. Parking is \$5 for Massachusetts residents. Open 9 a.m. to sunset.

The Mount Holyoke Range State Park

Location: Amherst

Description: The 3,000-acre [Mount Holyoke Range State Park](#) features a 7-mile mountain ridge line and a challenging hike known as the Seven Sisters. The park also includes streams, wetlands, woods, and thickets. Visitors can explore more than 30 miles of blazed trails. Free parking. The restroom and Visitor Center are closed due to COVID.

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

Location: Florence

Description: For a relaxed hike, check out the [Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area](#). Fitzgerald Lake is a 911-acre preserve owned by the City of Northampton and co-managed by Broad Brook Coalition and the Northampton Conservation Commission. Its diverse habitat, including upland forest, marshes, old pastures, and a 40-acre lake, is home to a large variety of wildlife. Visitors can enjoy almost 10 miles of trails, an elevated wildlife blind, and a boardwalk and dock for launching canoes and kayaks. Use the North Farms Road entrance and parking lot for an accessible paved path, bridge, and boardwalk or [download this map](#) for other options.

Biking

The Manhan Rail Trail



Photo: [Trail Link](#)

The [Manhan Rail Trail](#) is a 9.6-mile, well-maintained walking and biking trail that goes right through Northampton and connects to other state trails. You can use it to bike or walk to local businesses, parks, the Connecticut River and surrounding towns. A lovely stretch takes you over the river on a pedestrian bridge. Trail end points are: Coleman Rd. (Easthampton) to The Oxbow, and Coleman Rd. (Easthampton) to King St. at the Norwottuck Rail-Trail (Northampton)

Kayaking in Pioneer Valley

By Bob Adams

Pioneer Valley has many great places for kayaking:

The Connecticut River can be a mixed bag for kayaking. There are lots of beautiful spots, especially on a weekday, but the river can also be crowded with dangerous motor boats and jet skis. So choose where you'll put in carefully. Here are some suggested places to try.



Barton's Cove off Route 2 in Gill. This is a bit of a trek, but it is a beautiful area with a great view of an eagle's nest. The cove itself usually doesn't have too many motorboats, but if you venture out into the main part of the river, that changes. There have been rentals available at the campground here, but that may have changed due to Covid-19. There is also hiking nearby at Northfield Mountain.

Deborah, out on the water while
we're all still asleep

Photo: Bob Adams

The boat ramp at the end of School Street in Sunderland. This is a beautiful stretch of the river with several islands just north of the launch spot. Those islands can be nice to land on and swim or wade from. I haven't looked for picnic spots but I expect they are there. The channel to the east of the river is pretty shallow so you don't get motor boats. The main channel can have motor boats on the weekend but I've never had a problem during the week. This is one of my favorites.

By the Coolidge Bridge in Northampton. This is a very convenient place. You can put in at the dock by the back path on Damon Road near Route 9 or up at the community rowing facility off Damon Road near where it goes under 91. This section of the river has tons of motor boats so I wouldn't go here on the weekend or in the evening after work. Rentals have been available at Sportsman Marina across the bridge in Hadley. Check before you go because the marina stopped rentals during the pandemic.

The Oxbow. The Oxbow, an extension of the Connecticut River, is a pretty place to kayak, with a number of nice tributaries. You can paddle up the Manhan River, the Mill River (through Arcadia Marsh) or the old Mill River bed from before the 1940s diversion. There are also several bays and coves. The main Oxbow has a fair number of motor boats, but the tributaries do not. The Manhan and the Mill can be hard to paddle too far up because of beaver dams, fallen trees and (at times) vegetation, but they are very pretty. There is an eagle's nest not far from the Oxbow and you'll frequently see eagles fishing there. You can launch from the boat launch on Route 5 or from Old Springfield Road by the bridge over the Mill River. If you park at the Route 5 boat launch, make sure your car looks like you launched a boat (i.e., it has a boat rack), or you will get a ticket.

Fitzgerald Lake in Northampton. This is a small lake in a Northampton conservation area. It is a nice place for a relaxed paddle. Put in from the dock at the end of the boardwalk. Park at the North Farms entrance to Fitzgerald. This is a longish way to carry your kayak to get to the lake so bring a cart or a friend.

Nashawannuck Pond in Easthampton. This is a pond by Nonotuck Park in Easthampton. Put in at the boat ramp on Williston Street. There are rentals from Valley Paddler right by the boat ramp.

Located farther away but worth trying

DAR State Forest in Goshen
Quabbin Reservoir (the northern part, off 202 and 122)

Erving State Forest in Erving

Swift River in Belchertown

Tully Lake in Royalston

Wendell State Forest in Wendell

Such a Deal!

Sharpen your knives: At North Shore Seafood on King Street. \$3 per knife. Great crab cakes, too.

Trim those sharp cat claws: At the [Pet Hotel Hadley](#) on Route 9. On Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the normal \$13 charge is reduced to \$5 per feline. Documented proof that the cat is up to date on rabies and other vaccinations is required. Advice: Reserve (by phone or online) at least a week in advance.

Recommended: Three Main Street Businesses to Try

Brits R U.S.



If *Downton Abbey*, HRH the Queen, and pints of Guinness set your heart aflutter, head over to Northampton's very own haven for Anglophiles. [Brits R U.S.](#) is located at 16 Armory Street (behind Thornes, next to the radio station), with a front door is graced by a proud Union Jack. The flag was

planted there by shop owner Alan Greaves, himself a British expat. It's "a fun place to visit, and they are very friendly and helpful," our critic says of this gourmet shop. Among the veddy British delicacies to be found there:

- a frozen food section, stocked with black pudding, meat and vegetarian pies, "banger" rolls and sausage pastry. (which our critic plans to try in the future)
- a baking section that includes the iconic Bird's custard powder and many things Cadbury
- a tea section, stocking Twinings
- a crisps (translation: *chips*) section
- a biscuit (translation: *cookies*) section
- Branston Pickles (well known to Brits, who eat them with all their sandwiches)

-- Recommended by Laura

Backstop

Soothe those pandemic shoulders. Zero-out those Zoom kinks. How? Indulge in a chair massage at [Backstop](#) on the second level of Thorne's Marketplace. A seated massage can have you de-stressed and revitalized in under a half hour, care of Backstop's professional massage therapists. Book [online](#). Prices are reasonable; for example, 25 minutes costs \$25. Backstop observes strict Covid guidelines.

-- Recommended by Melinda

Bueno y Sano

This eatery, located in a former bank on Main, may appear from the outside as just another Mexican knock-off with canned guacamole. But step inside: You'll find a large and airy space offering take-out gourmet burritos, tacos and salads. Bueno y Sano was founded in Amherst in 1995 by UMass alum Bob Lowry, who's since expanded to seven restaurants and today co-owns the company with members of a Salvadoran family who manage some of the locations. Four of Lowry's relatives also work for Bueno.

At the Noho outlet, vegan and vegetarian items are available, and the carnivore offerings (pork, chicken and shrimp) are fresh and topped off by Thai peanut sauce, chipotle sour cream, pico de gallo, and other yummy choices, with sprinklings of fresh herbs. Prices are moderate, and delivery is available on weekends. The Korean BBQ burrito and the Miso Salad will change your life.

-- Recommended by Joan

Principles for Compassionate Living **By Julie Wittes-Schlack**

In response to a challenging membership issue several months ago, a small group of VHC members (and one non-member, Virginia) have been meeting to read and discuss Karen Armstrong's [12 Steps to a Compassionate Life](#).

While we didn't love the book, our discussions have helped us get to know one another better. They've also provoked us to think broadly about how to exercise compassion in both our personal and community lives, and to reconcile compassion with legitimate anger and the struggle for social justice.

With this message, we want to share some principles we derived from our discussions, in the hope that they may be useful to us all as we try to forge and maintain our community:

- **Take** a breath/examine your own reactions before responding to others. Ask, “Am I acting on my values? Am I being the person I want to be?”
- **Assume** positive intent.
- **Treat** others as being as important as yourself.
- **Recognize** your blind spots and challenge your assumptions, particularly with race. As White people, we may not be conscious of the suspicion and harassment Black people are subjected to. Another assumption might be that a mom feeding her kid candy for breakfast happens because she is uneducated or lazy. Instead, the reality may be that this mother has to say “no” to so many things privileged parents don’t have to that saying “yes” to candy is something manageable.
- **Acknowledge** that a “safe space” doesn’t necessarily mean a conflict-prohibited space. Conflict need not imply danger: That safe space may be a *brave* space in which the discomfort of being “the other” is shared.

Come Join Our New Study Group

Rather than working our way through a single book, we’ll be focusing on articles, podcasts, and videos relevant to a specific topic under the broad theme of *Living (Justly and Compassionately) in the World*.

Our readings and discussions will examine myriad topics, from nonviolent communication, violence against minorities and the question of what free speech is, to the challenges transsexual people face, the problem of cultural appropriation, environmental implications of our diets and more. For each session, a facilitator will decide on the topic and send out assigned reading content.

How to Participate

Our study group does not make policy or focus on pragmatic concerns, but rather explores ideas and their implications for how we live in the world. Unlike Sociocracy, which is designed to ensure both fairness and efficiency, our discussions wander and allow people to speak as often as they wish.

With those objectives in mind, we want to limit the participants in each biweekly session to nine people. But we also want to be flexible and accommodate core members’ occasional absences. Therefore, we’ll announce in advance each

session's topic and number of extra slots available (with still more "silent observer" spaces possible).

Our upcoming meeting dates are: June 2, June 16, June 30, July 14 and July 28. All meetings convene at 9:15 a.m. For the next 3-4 sessions, we'll be discussing the nature of hope as it applies to social/political change, and specifically to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. We'll start by reading Rebecca Solnit's essay, [The Slow Road to Sudden Change](#). If you'd like to attend (and can commit to at least three consecutive sessions), please RSVP Deborah Schifter.

Summertime Pests

Anti-Tick Strategies by Pedro Levy



Whenever I return from the woods and find ticks on my clothing, which can then move onto my skin and cause Lyme disease, I take immediate action. I place the clothing ASAP into the clothes dryer for 20 minutes, to tumble dry. This shakes off any ticks.

For overall prevention, what's key is a good repellent (more on that below) as well as wearing long pants, tube socks, and, preferably, a long-sleeved shirt. The pant legs should be slipped inside the socks. Maital also uses gaiters for additional sealing.

For a repellent, I recommend Sawyer Premium Insect Repellent pump spray containing permethrin, a chemical only for clothing. (Sawyer products for skin applications contain a different chemical, picaridin).

Sawyer products come in different containers, but Maital and I prefer the spray for a more uniform application.

If you're applying a repellent to your skin, Sawyer is the best choice. A recent *New York Times* article, citing *Wirecutter*, said that the skin chemical picaridin is a "compound that's as effective as DEET without the drawbacks." It praised the pump spray option for all uses, noting that other repellent containers leave droplets on the skin and that aerosol products are harder to control, and wasteful.

Ideally, for your own use of the repellent, spread your clothing out -- especially pants and socks -- and spray uniformly. The website for Sawyer says that spraying lasts a few washings. If that clothing is assigned just for walks in the woods, don't wash it too often, so it remains treated.

The clothing spray does not smell or stain, but should not be in contact with skin. We treat our clothing outdoors.

A historical note: As far back as 1958, my parents, in Ecuador founded a chemical manufacturing company which extracted pyrethrin from a type of daisy which grows extensively in the Andes. Pyrethrin's active ingredient is permethrin, the synthetic pyrethroid described above. Subsequently, global forces and plant disease forced us out of the business, but earlier, our pyrethrins were in Raid household insecticide.

Pyrethrin, interestingly, is key in the prevention of malaria in rural tropical areas.

Why Knotweed Should Worry You

A Q&A with Doug McCarroll

Doug McCarroll is one of our local go-to folks on knotweed. His initial motivation was the big patch – perhaps a tenth of an acre – growing behind his neighbor's house on Higgins Way. Doug proposed that TCB developers get involved by providing materials for “smothering” the plant here on Village Hill. Knotweed deserves this cruel fate – Doug recently explained why.



Photo: concordma.gov

Q. What is knotweed, exactly, and why should we worry about it?

Doug: [Japanese knotweed](#) is its full name. It's the worst or one of the worst invasive species in the world and here in our wonderful capitalist society we admire initiative and ambition. And this as a plant has a great deal of ambition.

Q. Where and how extensively on Village Hill does it grow?

I do not feel free to communicate every place that I know. Knotweed is a sensitive issue and there are some people that talk to me, [but] I can tell you that the publicly known areas include the patch behind my house. There's also a patch on the east

side of Olander Drive, not far from your community, which three of the households along Olander Drive have been dealing with. They've basically smothered that patch with help from Mass Development. You can see the patch if you go to Memorial Park, to the path behind the park, and walk in a southeasterly direction. It's basically covered with mulch.

Q. You mentioned “smothered.” Is there some kind of accepted strategy for dealing with patches?

If you have the inclination and go online, what you'll find is that there is a lot of controversy about knotweed. You'll find people who'll say that smothering doesn't work. You can find an article – from some department of the New Hampshire government – that says smothering does work. It's one fairly accepted approach.

Q. What does that entail?

The standard approach is you put down a layer of mulch, first, and you put plastic over it and you put another layer of mulch. The first layer is to protect the plastic from getting penetrated by plants under it when people walk on it. The second layer of mulch is to protect the plastic from the rays of the sun which would deteriorate the plastic – I don't know how quickly.

You want the plastic to stay there a long time, like ten years, in my opinion. What's the plastic doing? It's preventing the knotweed from growing up and getting sunlight. On the patch I worked on, I used cardboard under the plastic in place of mulch. I think that this provides about the same amount of protection against punctures as a layer of mulch.

It's best to think of knotweed as roots, called rhizomes, and basically you get a network of roots. They're how I imagine neurons in the brain looking -- roots connected to other roots, through tendrils. What it does like any plant is, during the growing season, it sends up shoots and they produce, through photosynthesis, the carbohydrates they need. They [hibernate] over the winter and send up more shoots the following spring.

Q. What about the issue of herbicides?

They're incredibly controversial. I've probably spent 40 hours researching, specifically, glyphosate, the main ingredient of Roundup.

Q. Obviously we don't want to use that. Is there anything that helps that is natural?

I've experimented with horticultural vinegar, which, sure enough, if you spray it on, it will kill the knotweed. However, (A) it's expensive; and (B) you're spraying

this mist on: Your eyes burn; if it gets on your skin, it burns. Household vinegar is 5 percent vinegar. Horticultural vinegar is 20 to 30 percent, so it can hurt the skin. And (C) you have to keep applying it week after week. And what I've found is a weeder tool. If you whack it, it's easier to kill the stuff because it's pretty soft. Like bamboo, it's a hollow tube, but bamboo can be pretty tough. [Knotweed is] the opposite of tough.

Q. Did it originate in Japan? Is that why it's *Japanese* knotweed?

Yes, and there are natural predators in Japan which we don't have here. So it's not invasive in Japan.

Q. So, it's like kudzu? It just went crazy in the American environment?

Yes. One more detail: I was having fun with the patch; I was going up there for hours, cutting down knotweed, pulling some up. And I came to the conclusion that this approach was crazy; smothering was much easier in the long run, massively more efficient.

Circle Reports

Dispute Resolution Circle: The Dispute Resolution team (DRT), currently composed of Marc G, Mary, Julie and Laura, welcomed Joyce to our helping circle on May 17. In April DRT members agreed to submit articles for the newsletter relevant to dispute resolution. Possible topics would include nonviolent communication, compassion and/or community guidelines, all intended to decrease the need for dispute resolution.

This month's offering is a piece by Julie about the key lessons her compassion group learned through readings and discussions. The DRT endorses these actions and thinks related short refreshers may be helpful as we move towards full membership and all community members living on site. The DRT also invites current or future members with knowledge or experience in nonverbal communication and/or mediation to consider joining the DRT. -- **Mary**

Common House Circle: Those of us already residing on the VHC campus know that work is proceeding on our Common House. Access to and usage of the building is on the way. That means a lot of issues to be considered and decisions made, with the Common House Circle helping to identify those issues and assisting the community in considering them. Our community-wide budget meeting on May 10 helped focus this work. Thanks to Karen for her masterful facilitation, and the community for productive input.

The Circle now needs further, specific input from members, coming from several surveys to be sent out soon. The first will look at Common House usage policies. Subsequent surveys will seek input on equipment and strategies towards ensuring that the Common House is a healthy space for everyone. Community input related to books and televisions/monitors, will also be sought. We urge a prompt and thoughtful response.

Finally, a reminder about our Memorial Day walks and picnic on May 31. At 10 a.m., participants can choose between two walks: an easy-to-moderate walk in the nearby Audubon preserve led by Craig and Dick, and a hike on Mt. Tom, led by Deborah. Both hikes will start out from VHC. We will all gather back on campus, hopefully hungry for a barbecue picnic, games and good conversation. More details to come in the days before Memorial Day. -- **Dick**