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Julie Silverman, Lake Champlain Lakekeeper for the Conservation Law Foundation holds a piece of foam pollutant that she found along the shore of Lake Champlain. PHOTOS BY SYDNEY P. HAKES/BURLINGTON FREE PRESS

Groups work together to reduce marine debris

Sydney P. Hakes Burlington Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

A new coalition is hitting the beaches and watersheds – not to relax, but to reduce the presence of marine debris. The Lake Champlain Basin Marine Debris Coalition is made up of six organizations whose mission is to “enhance community awareness of and reduce the presence of marine debris in Lake Champlain, Lake George and their tributaries.” Marine debris is defined as any human-made solid material that ends up in waterways, from the ocean to freshwater environments. Water pollution has been a longstanding issue for all lakes, rivers and tributaries, but has been exacerbated by flooding the past few summers. Flooding of the Winooski River due to heavy rainfalls has not only devastated homes and farms, but has pulled trash and debris into the waterways, where it sits in the water and litters the shores. Coalition members include: Lake Champlain Sea Grant develops and shares science-based knowledge benefiting the Lake Cham-



Small pieces of plastic pollutant can be found along Lake Champlain shores or waterways. They are a danger to wildlife who may consume the foam or plastic along with the toxic materials on it.

plain basin. The Institute is a cooperative effort of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural See COALITION, Page 3A

UVM study focuses on gender-diverse individual’s access to care

Dan D’Ambrosio Burlington Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

Gender-diverse people fear losing their access to gender-affirming care and may resort to self-harm or “questionable alternatives” if access disappears, according to new research by a University of Vermont professor of nursing published on July 16 in JAMA Network Open, a publication of the American Medical Association. Teresa Graziano, lead author of the study, surveyed 489 gender-diverse Americans, ages 18 and over, about their expectations for medical care after President Donald Trump campaigned on rolling back protections for the nearly 2 million trans, nonbinary and intersex individuals in the United States, according to a news release. Gender affirming care (GAC) includes surgical procedures, hormonal treatment, and mental health services for people with gender dysphoria, a condition where people feel they are a different gender than their physical body. Graziano found every respondent believed they would lose access to care, and nearly one-third reported they would consider some form of do-it-yourself hormone therapy. More than 21% of respondents expressed either active or passive suicidal ideation, according to a news release. “This is a population that already feels that their access to care is constantly under threat, and so when you have somebody going into power that is campaigning on removing their access to care, they believe it,” Graziano said in a news release. Graziano is a registered nurse who uses they/them pronouns.

Supreme Court upholds Tennessee ban on gender-affirming care for minors

Graziano’s study ended on Inauguration Day, January 20. Since then, Trump has issued a series of executive orders preventing the federal government from recognizing more than two sexes – male and female – and directing federal agencies and programs to work toward banning gender-affirming care for trans youth. Additional orders include proposals to prohibit gender-affirming care as an essential benefit for patients on health insurance plans offered under the Affordable See STUDY, Page 2A

Your guide to VT eateries featured on ‘Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives’

Rin Velasco USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW ENGLAND

“Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives” is one of Food Network’s most popular series, taking viewers from coast to coast to visit some of America’s classic “greasy spoon” restaurants. The show’s host, Guy Fieri, is one of the most recognizable celebrity chefs, as well as a restaurateur. Since its premiere in 2007, “Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives” has featured hundreds of eateries, including several in Vermont. And with season 51 of the series having ended in June

of 2025, we thought we’d take a look back at the six Vermont eateries featured on the show. While one of the restaurants has closed since its episode aired, the majority remain open for business. Bluebird Barbecue, Burlington Where: 317 Riverside Ave. About: Sporting crispy brussels, tofu burnt ends and charred broccoli Caesar salad on its menu, Bluebird Barbecue not only caters to the meat-lovers in the area but See RESTAURANTS, Page 3A



Mushroom lasagna with eggplant bacon crumbles at Pingala Cafe in Burlington, shown on Jan. 30. GLENN RUSSELL/FREE PRESS

