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**Roses to project that puts dolls in the hands of children in need**

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**ROSES** to The Doll Project, a collaboration among three local organizations -- Vermont Arts Exchange, Bennington School and Project Against Violent Encounters -- that helped to put unique, hand-crafted dolls into the hands of incoming PAVE families with young children as a welcome gifts. The Doll Project gave students at Bennington School a chance to give back by creating ceramic dolls at the VAE. The project was beneficial for both the incoming children at PAVE and empowering for the Bennington School Girls, according to the VAE.

**ROSES** to the Center for Restorative Justice program to help area drivers with suspended licenses and fines to pay get back behind the wheel. The new DLS (driving with a suspended license) program. Leitha Cipriano, executive director of the CRJ, told the Banner that for those with suspended licenses "It's a huge problem. Before they know it, they've gotten themselves into a situation that they can't get out of and things snowball quickly. They're not supposed to be driving but need to work to pay off fines." The new program offers these offenders the opportunity to regain control. **THORNS** to whoever stole an American flag from the Kyle Gilbert Memorial Bridge in Brattleboro and then possibly burned it at another location. Police in Brattleboro were alerted to the stolen flag early Tuesday morning and soon got another call that someone found a burned flag under an Interstate 91 bridge. The monument to honor Kyle Gilbert, who died while serving in Iraq in 2003, has been defaced twice before. To echo the words of former Brattleboro Selectboard member Pat DeAngelo, who was a board member when the bridge was dedicated, "What the hell is wrong with people? Kyle's family has suffered enough."

**ROSES** to the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union and Abbey Food Services for providing free school breakfast for all district students during the first two weeks of the school year, from Sept. 3 to 13. As it applies to all students, the program differs from the state's free and reduced meal program, which will provide breakfast and lunch to qualifying students. Both are responding to an inability to afford food that is apparent among many Vermont residents. Kids need full bellies to be able to open their minds!

**ROSES** to the Bennington Free Library's summer reading program, which enrolled more than 600 children over the summer. Participants signed a pledge at the beginning of July, received a journal to record their progress, and were awarded certificates at a "Down the Rabbit Hole -- Party Down with Alice, the Mad Hatter & Friends" on Aug. 14. What a fun way to encourage kids to keep up their reading habits over the summer.

**ROSES** to the Arlington Memorial High School soccer program, which is so popular this year it attracted 26 of the school's 107 total students in grades 9-12 to try out. "There have been pretty consistent numbers," assistant coach Travis Hess told the Banner. The school may need to add a junior varsity team next year if the program's popularity continues.

**ROSES** to the donors who, over the past three months, have given more than \$2 million to Southern Vermont College to support scholarships, resources for faculty and staff, and fund campus beautification efforts. Among the donations was a gift totaling \$1.225 million from a Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund and a charitable trust the largest in the school's history.

**ROSES** to Bennington Fire Department's Steve Crawford, who was honored in Sunday's Battle Parade after being named Chief of the Year by the Vermont State Firefighters Association.

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