



### Visions of fall

Marrowbone celebrates autumn with theater in the woods of Lincoln. See Arts + Leisure.



### Rivals duel

An intense Saturday soccer game ended with what both coaches called a fair result. See Page 1B.



### Sports Report

Our special section inside takes an in-depth look at the local fall high school athletic teams.

# ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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## Mount Abraham staff excited for new mobile health unit

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — A new mobile health unit will soon be unveiled at Mount Abraham Union High School, offering students primary healthcare services every Wednesday.

A joint effort of Bristol's Mountain Health Center, the Body Online Lab at Middlebury College and the Mount Abraham Unified School District, the mobile unit is intended to make healthcare more accessible for students with the help of local, medical professionals.

"We spend a lot of time talking about this transactional form of buying healthcare or getting access to healthcare, but really what we're doing here is connecting people, resources and knowledge that exist already," said Kristin Bright, a professor of medical anthropology and public health at Middlebury College, who leads the Body Online Lab.

The mobile health center is just the first part of a larger school-based health center initiative within MAUSD, intended to address student absenteeism, meet student healthcare needs and assist school nurses in their work.

Mount Abe's Health Office has

played a major role in advocating for the creation of this mobile health unit. The team behind the initiative credits the school's lead nurse Wanda Bouvier. A Mount Abe alum with over 44 years of experience working as a registered nurse in Addison County, Bouvier has brought a familiar face to the operation.

"The expertise that she brings from multiple experiences in the healthcare community county-wide is important," Bright said. "She's the connection between not just multiple spaces of care, but multiple time points in peoples' lives and that builds multi-generational trust."

Bouvier's 15 years at Mount Abe have familiarized her with local students' needs. She's optimistic that the mobile unit will help address these needs while keeping kids in school.

"We're hoping to really decrease our absences, which were very high last year, in part because of COVID but not all of it was COVID. A lot of it was kids couldn't get into the doctor, kids were ill and didn't feel well. Now we have a venue they can access right here in their own school," Bouvier said.

Once opened, the mobile health

unit will operate every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Clinicians from Mountain Health Center will provide services such as:

- Assessment of and treatment for acute illnesses including ear infections, strep throat, influenza and rashes.
- Care coordination for chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, etc.
- Management of musculoskeletal and sports injuries.
- Laboratory testing such as for strep throat, mono, flu, urinalysis, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Sexual and reproductive health services.
- Wellness counseling on topics such as exercise, healthy eating, substance use, sexual health and mental health.
- Sports physicals.

With the introduction of these services, Mount Abe Principal Shannon Warden said she is excited for the additional care the school will be able to provide its students.

"To have that collaboration between our health office and the doctors (at MHC) to increase communication and meet the medical and wellness needs of our

kids is really incredible," she said. "Schools are essentially the heart of a community and they're relied upon for a lot of services. This is just another piece of that puzzle in education where we talk about the whole child and their whole well-being, so this will be a huge asset."

Collaborators hope to meet more students' needs by expanding

services down the road, such as offering dental care and serving the elementary schools in the 5-town area. Though for now, the team is focused on the launch at Mount Abe, which has already received a lot of support from the community. "The kids are very stoked; they're looking forward to it. The AD team, the athletic director is

very excited because this opens a whole door of opportunities for him for educational purposes, because these folks are wonderful at doing education as well as regular care," Bouvier said. "It's a new concept for families. Once we get our brochures out and everything, parents will have a better understanding and I think it'll go far."



MOUNT ABE SCHOOL nurses and clinicians from Mountain Health Center stand in front of the new mobile health unit launching at the Bristol high school this fall. From left to right: Mount Abe school nurse Brenda Barsalou, MHC nurse manager Bridget Preston, MHC medical practice manager Roxanne Fucile, Mount Abe's lead school nurse Wanda Bouvier, MHC family nurse practitioner Lindsay White, MHC family care physician Kate LaMancuso and Kristin Bright, an assistant professor of medical anthropology and public health at Middlebury College.

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Fall Customer Appreciation



INSIDE THE NEW mobile health unit opening at Mount Abraham Union High School this fall. Once open, the unit will be staffed with clinicians from Bristol's Mountain Health Center and offer primary healthcare services for students every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Independent photo/Marin Howell