



University of Vermont Center for Community News

For Immediate Release

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Center for Community News at UVM Raises \$500,000 for Arts & Life Reporting Initiative

Powered by student journalists, the program will expand coverage of culture, history and people

BURLINGTON, VT – This fall, the Center for Community News will launch its first student reporting initiative dedicated exclusively to covering art, history and culture in Vermont and across the country. The project will provide new opportunities for student journalists to explore the under-covered stories of their communities and make them free to local news outlets. The initiative is made possible through support from Lyman Orton and Janice Izzi, the Henry Luce Foundation, and other generous donors to the UVM College of Arts & Sciences.

“Strengthening cultural coverage is about more than just increasing community information,” said CCN Managing Director Meg Little Reilly. “This storytelling cultivates social cohesion and trust among neighbors. It can be a bulwark against the threat of toxic polarization.”

The CCN Arts & Life initiative will expand the volume and depth of coverage of the beat, with an emphasis on stories that can be told using multimedia approaches. Coverage of music, dance, food, visual art and events presents opportunities to blend print, broadcast and digital media, and to reach news audiences across mediums.

“CCN has been at the forefront of developing creative solutions to the challenges facing local news,” said Henry Luce Foundation Interim President Sean Buffington. “The Luce Foundation is proud to support this newest initiative to revitalize arts and culture reporting which has seen a dramatic falloff in recent years. We hope that a new generation of journalists will respond to CCN’s call to nurture vital public conversation about creativity and artistic inquiry.”

In addition to its national work, CCN is also home to UVM’s Vermont-based newsroom, the [Community News Service](#), which produces more than 400 student-reported multimedia stories each year for roughly twenty local news outlets. Its local partners range from small newspapers to statewide outlets like VTDigger and Vermont Public.



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The Community News Service has long covered arts and culture, but student interest in this area far exceeds current capacity. With this initiative, more students will have the opportunity to produce in-depth stories with the attention of a dedicated editor. In addition to serving Vermonters, the Community News Service is a laboratory for testing new ideas that are replicable for CCN's national network of student reporting programs.

“Celebrating the creativity and cultural connections of Vermonters is central to our work,” said Reilly. “With this project, we will give more students the opportunity to explore the rich offerings in their communities, more reasons to support local news, and a model to share with our partners across the country.”

To lead the new initiative, CCN has recruited several outstanding staff and advisors, including Rachel Hellman, who was most recently a staff writer at *Seven Days*, covering Vermont's small towns; Kevin Graffagnino, a leading Vermont historian and the author of 25 books; David Blow, an award winning reporter and journalism professor at Castleton University; Pearl Bellomo, a Rutland based reporter and recent Castleton graduate and Joseph Heinemann, a history graduate student at the University of Vermont.

The launch phase of CCN's Arts & Life Reporting Initiative is made possible by \$450,000 in new funding from Lyman Orton and Janice Izzi, the Henry Luce Foundation; generous donors to the UVM College of Arts and Sciences; and donors to the H. Nicholas Muller III fund including Robert Mello, Garrison Nelson, Brook Muller, Charles Muller and Nick Ward.

This coverage will help to sustain a robust news ecosystem of local news and celebrate music, theater, dance, visual art, history (including the Republic of Vermont and why it chose to join the union as the 14th state as we approach the 250th year commemoration of the United States), civic engagement, and the everyday lived experience of Vermonters. In honor of Professor Muller a particular focus on connecting stories of Vermont's past with the present will be an important theme of the student reporting. Professor Muller was a leader on the UVM campus for decades, serving as a professor, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Director of the Living-Learning Center, and co-founder of the Center for Research on Vermont.

Collaborators include the Center for Research on Vermont and **the Center for the Advancement of Public Action** at Bennington College.

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About CCN



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The [Center for Community News](#) at UVM is a nonpartisan nonprofit that is working to grow and strengthen university-led reporting programs around the country, building a more sustainable future for local news outlets with the next generation at the forefront.

About the University of Vermont

Since 1791, the [University of Vermont](#) has worked to move humankind forward. UVM's strengths align with the most pressing needs of our time: the health of our societies and the health of our environment. Our size—large enough to offer a breadth of ideas, resources, and opportunities, yet intimate enough to enable close faculty-student mentorship across all levels of study—allows us to pursue these interconnected issues through cross-disciplinary research and collaboration. Providing an unparalleled educational experience for our students, and ensuring their success, are at the core of what we do. As one of the nation's first land grant universities, UVM advances Vermont and the broader society through the discovery and application of new knowledge. UVM is derived from the Latin Universitas Viridis Montis (in English, University of the Green Mountains).