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VERMONT ALLIANCE OF  
I N D E P E N D E N T  
C O U N T R Y S T O R E S  
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Did you know? You can get this newsletter ready to print in color at the vaics.org website.

**WEBSITE UPDATES**

The seasonal Alliance website update will take place the week before Christmas. If you have new photos, information, store history, etc., please get them to Dennis (bathory@vaics.org or 176 Cox Brook Road, Northfield 05663) by December 15.

• NEWSBRIEF •

*The Vermont Alliance of Independent Country Stores is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote and enhance country stores, while preserving their unique heritage and contributions to their communities.*

**MCLEOD COUNTRY STORES ARTWORK**

Those of you who came to the winter meeting at Willey's Store in Greensboro or who have visited the store pages on the Alliance website will have seen the country store oil paintings by Janet McLeod of the Adamant Co-op.

After their appearance in Greensboro, Janet's paintings then graced the Williston Welcome Center, greeting Vermont visitors with images of our independent country stores.

And now, from November 30 through January 31, her work will be on display in the Governor's Office at the Pavilion Office Building, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, at 109 State Street in Montpelier. You can visit the show every weekday from 8:30-4:30.

You are also invited to the Artist's Reception on Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> from 3:00-5:00 with Governor James Douglas. Congratulations to Janet, an Alliance store and board member, on her wonderful paintings and their appearance as part of the Governor's daily working environment!

**YOUR LOCAL DIRECTORY LISTING**

*Your Local Directory* is a regional telephone book with white and yellow pages, and with extensive local resource listings. In the latest Central Vermont book, the Alliance's mission is printed, along with a listing of our central Vermont members.

Good work on the part of Alliance co-director Jayne Nold-Laurendeau got those listings included! (More info: jayne@vaics.org)

**DUES, RENEWALS, GIFTS, SPONSORS**

We're proud to acknowledge all the renewals among the Alliance membership. Almost 100% of the members are continuing with the Alliance into 2006, including friends and sponsors.

If you have received your bill, please send your dues along. The Alliance has become a national model for how highly independent store owners can come together to enhance their businesses.

Don't forget that we have both Associate and Friend memberships. Your local bank, hardware store, bed & breakfast, real estate agency, food distributor, accountants, etc., can all be associate and friend members of the Alliance. Membership forms are found at our website, <http://vaics.org/>

And finally, just a reminder that Long Trail Brewing Company is the Alliance's major sponsor for 2005-2006. Their help and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

**ANNUAL MEETING MAY 11**

The Alliance's annual meeting will take place on Thursday, May 11, 2006, in central Vermont. Time and location will be announced, but set aside the date now!

## ALLIANCE SURVEY IS COMING!

There will be a critical survey coming your way. At our recent board meeting, we talked about how we could improve the Alliance's services for you. We have new ideas, and also programs that have been waiting for a while to get underway.

*This will be a web survey, so please make sure we have your current email address; send it along to [bathory@vaics.org](mailto:bathory@vaics.org)*

Among the topics of the survey will be those below. Please read through them to get an idea when the survey arrives:

**The Passport Program.** The program encourages store visits, because a passport stamped at (say) ten Alliance stores can be exchanged for a gift of Vermont products. (Charles Wilson of Taftsville has offered to handle the shipping logistics.) Would you be interested in participating? Do you have suggestions?

**The Map Project.** Should it be online (as it is now) or printed or both? The cost of a printed map has been out of our reach, but we have new options. A map that includes an advertisement for your store might be possible, for example. Would you be interested in participating? Do you have suggestions? This might also be a more generic Independent Country Stores poster with beautiful photographs and a small map, or even a calendar. How about postcards? Note cards? What are your thoughts?

**Private Labeling.** The "Vermont Village Foods" program is finally coming into its own, with initial products possible early in 2006. Would you be interested in these Alliance private label products? What kinds of products?

**Country Store Month.** The Alliance has held two of these, with each store coming up with unique activities. Did you participate? Our sponsor members offer special opportunities for Country Store Month. Have you taken advantage of them? Did you know about them? How can the Alliance help with future Country Store Month opportunities?

**Vermont History Expo.** We have had a presence at the Expo for several years, last year as part of Country Store Month. Out of our participation came numerous positive results, including our participation in the Vermont Seal of Quality program. Did you know about the History Expo? Did it help you? Will you want to be involved next year?

**The "Buy Local" Program.** This was also part of Country Store Month, and we have a special all-season Alliance "Buy Local" banner and special offers from some of our Alliance sponsors, as well as support materials from the Agriculture Department. Did you know about the Buy Local program? Are you participating in it? Do you need a banner?

**Vermont Seal of Quality.** The Alliance has been awarded this prestigious seal as part of the Department of Agriculture's Farm Heritage Program. Did you know about it? You are entitled to display the seal and placard. Do you have one? Do you display it? Did you know you can be included in the Ag Department's publication *Vermont Harvest*?



**Efficiency Vermont.** This program is available to Alliance members, with inspections, advice, and financial solutions for reducing your energy dependence. Did you know about it? Are you participating?

**The VAICS.org Website.** The Alliance's website is easy to find, and each member store has placement on the map and has an individual page. Do you use it? Does your page have photos and maps? Do you receive "ask the storekeeper" forms from online customers? What more could the website offer to you and your store?

**Cooperation with Statewide Groups.** The Milk Board, Vermont Partners, Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association, Department of Agriculture and many other statewide organizations have visited with us. Did you know about them? Have you visited with them? Have they come to you? Did you receive help or ideas?

**Tour Groups.** It is difficult to get tour groups and bus tours to stop at our stores, but it is something to work on as numerous members have requested it. Would this help you? Should we pursue it?

**The Video Project.** A mini-documentary of each store is one of the plans we had hoped to be able to fund over the past five years. This video project could produce local 'loops' for resorts or B&Bs as well as provide material for schools. Would this help you? Could you participate? Are there historical societies or granting groups you know who might finance the videos?

**Your Colleagues.** The Alliance members are all bursting with ideas on how to make our stores more effective, attractive and profitable. Have you been in touch with other members? Have you helped them? Have they helped you?

Of course, you're welcome to send along your thoughts at any time...but the survey will be on its way via email in the next few weeks!

Vermont Alliance of Independent Country  
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Rutland, Vermont 05701



Not a member of the Alliance? Think you are eligible as one of Vermont's historic, family-owned, independent country, general, or village stores? Then please contact Jayne Nold-Laurendeau ([jayne@vaics.org](mailto:jayne@vaics.org)) or visit the Alliance website (<http://vaics.org/>) for more information and an application form.