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—Contributor.....Jon Schottland
—Contributor email.....jonschottland@gmail.com
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—Dateline.....Brattleboro
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 What makes us great

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 A volunteer leaf brigade — with town and state elected
3 officials on duty — feels like the Vermont way

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 THE OTHER DAY I was walking my dog on Washington
6 Street in Brattleboro. It was early morning and the streets were
7 mostly empty, when a pickup truck slowly drove past and then
8 pulled over to the curb ahead of us.

9 A woman dressed in a sweatshirt, jeans, and winter hat
10 jumped out of the cab. She picked up several bags of leaf litter
11 that had been placed there, tossing them in the back of her truck.

12 The town’s decision to suspend leaf pickup this year as
13 an austerity measure in hard times had created an opportunity for
14 someone with initiative to seize the moment and make a few
15 bucks. Or so I thought.

16 I stopped to chat with the woman and was impressed to
17 learn she was not charging a penny for her efforts.

18 *“We’re part of a volunteer leaf brigade,” she said.*

19 *Neighbors helping neighbors in a time of need — that*
20 *feels like the Vermont way.*

21 As we got talking, she told me she had a farm outside of
22 town called Lilac Ridge. I’d been to their sweet little farmstand
23 several times.

24 *“I’m Amanda, I’m on the local Selectboard,” she said.*

25 *Really? This is even better than I thought. The people*
26 *making tough decisions are out here early on a Saturday morning*
27 *being part of the solution in difficult times.*

28 Just then, a rental van filled with leaf litter bags slowly
29 approached and came to a stop with more volunteer brigade
30 members: another person from the Selectboard, along with a
31 state representative from a nearby district here in town.

32 *“You must be taking a lot of heat for some of these*
33 *decisions,” I suggested. Amanda said that, well, yes, people have*
34 *a lot of passion and strong opinions.*

35 *“But that’s because they all care about something,” she*
36 *said. “They care about our town.” She just tries to listen to*
37 *everybody — that’s how she approaches things.*

38 *“We have a lot of work still to do,” she said.*

39 Then Amanda hopped back in her truck with her dog
40 and drove off down Washington Street to pick up more bags. My
41 dog Tommy Tom-Toms and I turned and headed home for
42 breakfast.

43 * * *

44 THE WHOLE THING left me wondering what the next
45 helpful thing might be, the next helpful thing that I could do.

46 How wonderful to live in Vermont, where ordinary
47 people are still trying to find a way to get through the day
48 together with good will.

49 It made me dream that someday members of the
50 executive and legislative branches in Washington, D.C. could
51 follow suit.

52 Yes, there's an extended government shutdown, but
53 meanwhile, how about if we roll up our sleeves and serve meals
54 in a soup kitchen to make sure people don't go hungry? At least
55 until the government opens up again for business?

56 Thanks Brattleboro, for being what and who you are.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

57 **JON SCHOTTLAND** is a psychotherapist and a school
58 counselor.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

62

###END LOGLINE###