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—Contributor.....Annie Landenberger  
—Contributor email.....verbatimvt@gmail.com  
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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Creativity for a cause

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 Artists, sponsors sought for 2026 CASP April Arts  
3 Marathon, which challenges local artists to share new work daily  
4 as a way to support asylum seekers in the region

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Southern Vermont's Community Asylum Seekers Project  
7 (CASP) is calling for artists and craftspeople from all disciplines  
8 — and sponsors — to participate in its second annual Arts  
9 Marathon, a fundraiser for area asylum seekers.  
10 Throughout April, area creatives will potentially be  
11 drawing, painting, sewing, blowing glass, throwing pots,

12 photographing, writing, composing, sculpting, and so on —  
13 sharing their work regularly with friends, family, and community  
14 members who sign up as their sponsors.

15 Put simply: Sponsors pledge a donation to CASP and  
16 receive daily art in return as CASP provides ongoing support to  
17 those sharing their work and communicating with sponsors.

18 “You get people to sponsor you to just make your work:  
19 People aren’t buying the work, it’s really offering sponsorship as a  
20 way of accessing creative practice,” says one of last year’s  
21 marathon artists, Candace Jensen, of Westminster. “Then it’s up to  
22 the artist what they end up sharing” and on which platform.

23 “Everyone wins: Artists hone their skills, sponsors  
24 receive a month of creativity, and asylum seekers in Southern  
25 Vermont receive support, including housing, basic living  
26 expenses, legal fees, and case management as they build new  
27 lives in Brattleboro and the surrounding area,” a press release  
28 explains.

29 The effort is, according to the release, “turning daily  
30 creativity into critical community support.”

## 31 **The long road**

32 CASP board President Francie Marbury, a CASP volunteer  
33 since 2018, has served on its board for most of those years and  
34 was first drawn to the effort to help asylum seekers after spending  
35 a year teaching in Costa Rica.

36 There, she observed “lots of people coming from  
37 Nicaragua into Costa Rica.”

38 “I paid attention to how these people were received,” she  
39 says. “For the most part, the Costa Ricans were incredibly  
40 welcoming. And yet, there was a point at which the economic  
41 reality set in. And if these were people who needed services or  
42 who were being perceived as taking jobs from others, then red  
43 flags began to go up.”

44 Her observations of immigrants' experiences in Costa  
45 Rica first compelled Marbury to volunteer with CASP, started by  
46 Steve Crofter in 2016.

47 Marbury explains that the organization "was set up to  
48 specifically serve asylum seekers because their position is so  
49 tenuous and so different from that of refugees."

50 As defined by [Amnesty International](#), a refugee "is a  
51 person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of  
52 serious human rights violations and persecution there. The risks  
53 to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no  
54 choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because  
55 their own government cannot or will not protect them from those  
56 dangers."

57 An asylum seeker is someone who likewise has sought  
58 safety in another country under those same circumstances, "but  
59 who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is  
60 waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim."

61 Marbury explains that asylum seekers "are not allowed  
62 to even apply for a work permit until six months after they have  
63 filed their case for asylum."

64 The process of seeking asylum is grueling, time-intensive,  
65 and sometimes fear-inspiring. Against all odds — terror at home  
66 and now fear here — asylum seekers continue to strive for a life  
67 of dignity and independence.

68 "Of the families we've been serving, there are just three  
69 that have received asylum, and that only in the last year," she  
70 says.

71 "It's a long road," Marbury adds. "And now the  
72 roadblocks are 10 times greater."

73 Many who've received work permits, she explains, are  
74 not able to apply for their renewal if they are in the process of  
75 seeking asylum.

76 "Some of these are new rules that have just been put out  
77 and they haven't actually been implemented yet. So we really

78 haven't seen how they're going to impact people," Marbury  
79 explains.

## 80 **A natural fit for Brattleboro**

81 Meanwhile, amid this tumult, CASP needs to raise funds  
82 to do its work. "We're totally dependent on donations to keep the  
83 organization going," Marbury says.

84 Even with only a few paid staff, "we looked at our  
85 budget and realized that to be able to pay people a living wage,  
86 we needed to find more ways of bringing in money," she says.  
87 They determined they would need to add another event to  
88 complement CASP's more long-standing fundraisers.

89 Thus, Marbury said, the CASP marathon emerged,  
90 modeled on that of a similar group in the Montpelier area.

91 "We basically piggybacked on them," she says. "They  
92 shared the way they were doing it and turned us on to the fellow  
93 who developed the web platform. And then it was just such a  
94 natural fit for Brattleboro"

95 Last year's inaugural marathon raised \$30,000 among  
96 536 sponsors/donors with 25 participating artists. This year the  
97 goal is \$50,000. Organizers hope to increase numbers this year,  
98 Marbury says, adding that many artists from 2025 are returning.

99 "The marathon starts April 1, but we will be taking new  
100 artists right up until then — and even after that, if there are  
101 people who find out about it late," she says.

102 Marbury adds: "For participating artists it's a great  
103 opportunity to have the nudge to really practice your work every  
104 day, whatever it is, and to be able to contribute to a cause  
105 without having to make a personal cash donation. And then to be  
106 able to share your work out."

107 CASP attracts sponsors through public relations and  
108 social media.

109 The artists also spread the word to their networks. Each  
110 artist also gets a page on the website, "and we encourage people  
111 to make it their own," says Marbury.

112 Artists can choose to keep sponsors updated on their  
113 progress on their work “right on their page on the website,” she  
114 adds.

115 Last year, “there were some people who weren’t that  
116 technologically savvy who found it difficult to use other platforms  
117 to communicate with their sponsors,” says Marbury. “So we  
118 decided to provide this as an easier way. And I think it works  
119 really well.”

120 Marbury herself sponsored a few artists last year  
121 “because it was our first time through, and I really wanted to get  
122 a feel for it and how it worked. I would wait until just before I  
123 was going to turn off my computer for the evening [to check for  
124 updates]. And then all this wonderful artwork came in.”

## 125 **‘Really great, really gratifying’**

126 According to the CASP release, 2025 marathon  
127 participants described the fundraiser “as both meaningful and  
128 transformative.”

129 One of them, Jensen, will be return and this year will be  
130 joined by her husband, painter Owen Schuh.

131 A calligrapher, printmaker, and painter, with a graduate  
132 degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Jensen  
133 also runs an artist residency program at her home in Westminster.

134 Invited by her neighbor, Rachel Worthington, a CASP  
135 board member, Jensen says she was “a little hesitant to join, only  
136 because it was like adding another thing to my plate.”

137 “But on closer inspection, it was an invitation to really  
138 engage with my creative practice and be more committed to my  
139 studio,” she says. “At the same time, I would be supporting this  
140 really vital and important social justice work.”

141 That call to humanitarian service won out, and despite  
142 her initial hesitation, she was “really excited to do it” and to  
143 reach out to other potential participants.

144 For the marathon month, she recalls, “we were in the  
145 studio making art, being experimental, and then sharing it with  
146 our sponsors: That was really great, really gratifying.

147 “It was just us focusing on our artwork and then sharing  
148 it with people who wanted to learn about it: That all felt really,  
149 really positive.”

150 “It’s very similar to a walkathon,” Jensen explains, “but  
151 instead of walking, you’re making art.”

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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152 For more information about participating in the Arts  
153 Marathon as an artist or a sponsor, visit [caspvt.org](http://caspvt.org).

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LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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