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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

A thriving Brattleboro requires a strong hospital

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

We must recognize that healthcare is as important to our
community as housing, transportation, recreation, education, and
economic opportunity

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

OVER THE PAST few years, something remarkable has
happened in Brattleboro.

Community organizations, businesses, municipal
leaders, healthcare providers, public safety professionals, and
residents have come together around a shared vision: to build a
stronger, healthier, and more vibrant community.

12 That vision is evident everywhere. While generational
13 storefronts change hands, new businesses are opening
14 downtown. Gallery Walk and the Festival of Miniatures bring
15 thousands of visitors into our downtown corridor. The arrival of
16 the new Amtrak station has strengthened our connection to the
17 region while enhancing accessibility. Plans for riverfront trail
18 expansions are creating opportunities for recreation and
19 economic development.

20 Through initiatives like Next Generation Brattleboro, our
21 community is intentionally working to attract young
22 professionals, families, and employment opportunities that create
23 our future. And through One Brattleboro, organizations across
24 sectors are breaking down silos to address systemic issues like
25 housing, public health, safety, and community well-being.

26 At Groundworks Collaborative, we have witnessed
27 firsthand what can happen when organizations choose
28 collaboration over isolation.

29 Every day, our staff work alongside law enforcement,
30 emergency responders, healthcare providers, housing
31 organizations, local businesses, and countless community
32 partners to ensure people experiencing homelessness, food
33 insecurity, behavioral health challenges, and housing instability
34 receive coordinated support.

35 No single organization can solve these challenges alone.

36 * * *

37 BRATTLEBORO MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (BMH) has always
38 been an essential part of that network. Like many rural hospitals
39 across the country, BMH is facing difficult financial realities and
40 making hard decisions to sustain services.

41 These challenges are not unique to our community, nor
42 are they easily solved. But they remind us of this core
43 importance: a thriving community depends upon a thriving
44 community hospital.

45 A hospital is much more than a place where people
46 receive medical care. It is one of our region's largest employers. It

47 is an economic driver. It is a partner in emergency response. It is
48 a cornerstone of behavioral health, chronic disease management,
49 preventive care, and recovery. It is where many families begin
50 their stories and where countless lives are saved every year.

51 For the people Groundworks serves, access to local
52 healthcare can be the difference between stability and crisis. For
53 older adults, traveling another 25 or 30 miles for care may
54 present an insurmountable barrier.

55 For individuals experiencing homelessness or living with
56 chronic illness, continuity of care is essential. For families
57 considering whether Brattleboro is a place to build a future,
58 access to quality healthcare is among the first questions any of us
59 would ask.

60 If we aspire to attract new residents, support local
61 businesses, grow our workforce, and create a community where
62 people choose to live and invest, we must recognize that
63 healthcare is every bit as important as housing, transportation,
64 recreation, education, and economic opportunity.

65 These investments are interconnected.
66 * * *

67 A RESILIENT COMMUNITY is built through partnerships. As
68 Brattleboro and the surrounding region invest in our future, we
69 must continue supporting the institutions that make that future
70 possible.

71 BMH is one of those institutions. Its long-term health
72 matters not only to those who walk through its doors seeking care
73 but to every organization working to build a stronger community.

74 Revitalization is not measured only by new buildings,
75 thriving businesses, or increased tourism. It is measured by
76 whether people can access housing, nutritious food, meaningful
77 employment, safe neighborhoods, and quality healthcare close to
78 home. These are the building blocks of a community where
79 people can thrive.

80 I was born at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. Today, I
81 have the privilege of raising my own family here. That perspective

82 gives me both an appreciation for the challenges we face and
83 tremendous optimism about the future of our town and region —
84 in no small part because of the way we collectively show up to
85 support what matters.

86 Let us continue that spirit of collaboration by recognizing
87 that a healthy community requires healthy institutions — and by
88 doing all we can to ensure they remain part of the Brattleboro we
89 are working so hard to build.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

90 **LIBBY BENNETT**, a lifelong Brattleboro resident, is the
91 executive director of Groundworks Collaborative, a nonprofit
92 organization working with people and systems to end hunger and
93 homelessness in southeastern Vermont.

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

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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