



National VOLUNTEER WEEK



AS A GUARDIAN ad litem at the Judge Frank Mahady Courthouse in Middlebury, Mike Greenwood interacts directly with children, which the former teacher really enjoys. In this volunteer activity he helps build a sense of meaning in the children he works with.

Independent photo/John S. McCright

Bristol's Volunteer Fair connects people with their local community

By MARIN HOWELL

BRISTOL — Addison County residents don't have to look far for opportunities to make a difference in their community.

There are numerous organizations that rely on volunteers to help with anything from fighting fires to distributing food or maintaining well-loved recreation spaces. One of those organizations is Tri-Valley Transit, whose Community Rides Drivers help transport residents to appointments and other places they need or want to get to.

"Our volunteers are our bloodline at Tri Valley Transit; without them we wouldn't be able to help the community in the way we do," said Rachel Landry, volunteer coordinator at Tri-Valley Transit. "Our volunteers help pick people up at their home and take them to medical appointments, to personal appointments. You can do anything from getting your hair done to... if you want to stop by 'Gather' in Middlebury. These are ways that you can get there, and that's all our volunteer drivers."

Tri-Valley Transit was one of 25

local organizations to take part in the Bristol Volunteer Fair held at Holley Hall on April 16. The event was aimed at giving residents a chance to connect with agencies and groups in the area, as well as learn how to contribute to the work they do in the community.

The event featured organizations from in and around Bristol and was organized by the Bristol Recreation Department, Bristol CORE and Imagine Addison County Vermont.

Lisa Grover is the Outreach and Relocation Coordinator for the Addison County Chamber of Commerce. She runs Imagine Addison County, a program funded through the state's Grants for Relocation Outreach Work, or GROW, Program.

"One of the principles (of the program) is to attract new people to Vermont to come here and settle, but also help people new to the area feel like part of their community — connecting them with resources, employers, their community in general," Grover explained.

Volunteering is a good way to get (See Fair, Page 3C)

"What I like to tell newcomers is the fastest way to make friends and best way to find your community is to volunteer for a group or program that speaks to their heart. You're going to find your people and make really great and strong connections."

— Lisa Grover

Guardians ad Litem speak for Vermont children

Adults keep communication open in court case involving youngest citizens

ADDISON COUNTY — Guardians ad litem are volunteers who are appointed by judges in juvenile court cases to advocate for the best interest of children involved in those cases.

They meet with parties to the case, spend time getting to know the child, attend court hearings, and give their opinion about what would be in the best interest of the child given the available options. Volunteers receive considerable training and mentoring before taking on their first case. Addison County has a dedicated team of volunteer GALs, and they are always looking for new candidates.

Right now, thousands of Vermont's children and youth are part of proceedings in Family Courts. Many of them are victims of abuse or neglect, accused of delinquent acts, or simply lost. They may be in foster care while they wait for safe, permanent homes. They may need someone to help them understand what's happening, to advocate for their best interests, and to make sure that their voices are heard.

To children, the entire court

experience may be confusing and scary. As part of the process, they may have their most private secrets revealed to strangers. When the case is over, these strangers disappear and leave the children to live with the decisions made about their lives.

The Vermont Guardian ad

Litem Program ensures that every court has trained volunteers to serve as caring and independent child advocates. A guardian ad litem can make certain that at least one child is not alone.

WHAT A GUARDIAN DOES

- Typically, a GAL:
 - Meets with the child at least once a month.
 - Gathers information from parents, foster parents and other people close to the child.

- Communicates regularly with the state Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the child's lawyer.

- Promotes cooperation between the parties.

- Ensures that the court has all relevant information about the child.

Some of the active guardians ad litem in Addison County have shared their experience helping kids involved with the courts.

RON MONROE

As a recently retired high school teacher, I was first drawn to becoming a Guardian ad Litem by the purpose of the position of helping children, and I have found that to certainly be the case.

While my training covered much helpful ground, I still find that there is so much to learn about being a GAL, as each case I take on has its unique challenges. So, as I make my way through my second year, my learning curve continues to be a high one as I become better acquainted not only with the Vermont family court system but also with myself.

In some ways I feel privileged to be allowed, if not welcomed, into a family at a moment of (See Guardians, Page 3C)

Current or Recent Volunteer Guardians ad Litem in Addison County

Deborah Dickerson
Christopher Dayton
Betty Farr
Peter Ryersbach
Cathy Vincent
Brenda Hamm
Tim Vincent
Valerie Szymkowicz
Ron Monroe
Kathleen Samler

Eileen Bradford
Christie Crowe
Linda Horn
Nita Wade
Mike Greenwood
Jennifer Thompson
Claudia Cooper
Susan Sears
Kathleen Mackey
Kathleen Pratt



AMONG THE 25 local organizations and groups featured at the Bristol Volunteer Fair was Bristol Cub Scout Pack 543, which raised funds for Homeward Bound by selling baked goods, homemade soup and empanadas at the event.

Photo courtesy of Lisa Grover

VOLUNTEER WEEK

A little time each month

A modest offering changes his perspective

Will Robinson has been a volunteer at the Charter House Coalition homeless shelter in Middlebury since 2023. He grew up in Warren, Vt., and studied Early Childhood Special Education at the University of Maine, Farmington. He was committed to returning to Vermont after college, found his first job in Middlebury, and now teaches preschool in a local Head Start program.

Will is also an avid and accomplished hiker. Last summer he through-hiked the Northeast 115 — that's all the 4,000-foot peaks in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, recording the fastest known time for the route that is more than 1,300 miles long. This month, we sat down to learn more about Will Robinson and what inspired him to volunteer.

Q: Has volunteer work always been a part of your life? Did you grow up volunteering?

Not really. I lived in Middlebury for a while before I started volunteering at Charter House. One winter, a few years ago, I walked across the state of Vermont from east to west. And I enjoyed myself because I had all of the equipment and gear that I needed. But I realized that there are people out there that are spending the night outside in the winter without what they need, and they're not having a good time. I didn't encounter too many people on my walk, but then I got into Burlington. And I started getting a lot of looks from people and that didn't feel nice. Because I wasn't particularly clean — I'd been walking and camping — and had a big backpack on, to them I looked unhoused. I reflected on that for a while. At the same time, I had been wanting to find a way to give back to my community. I couldn't be out hiking all the time and wanted something more meaningful to fill my afternoons.

Q: What drew you to volunteering at Charter House specifically?

I was already working in Middlebury and happened to see a Front Porch Forum post from Heidi [Lacey] saying that the Charter House was looking for volunteers. Between my reflections on my Vermont walk and wanting to give back to the local community in some way, it seemed like the perfect fit.

Q: How often do you volunteer at Charter House?

I'm there Thursday evening for about three hours. I do take the summers off, usually because I'm off to go on a hiking adventure. I call myself a three-season volunteer.

Q: Can you share a specific memorable experience you've had while volunteering at Charter House?

Not necessarily one specific thing, but I love hearing the guest success stories. For example, one week someone tells me, "I'm looking at an apartment." And then the next week I meet up with them to talk again, and they tell me, "I went to see the apartment, and I signed the contract. I'm moving next week. You're probably never gonna see me again." It's a little sad, but it always feels so good to share in their excitement. And it's happened a good handful of times now.

Q: What have you learned from the people you've met while volunteering at Charter House?

I think I've learned how important it is to laugh and joke around with the guests. Charter House is their home for the time being. They don't necessarily need us to be serious all the time. It's about connecting. I think that's just one of the best things that I see there; the staff has such good relationships with all of the guests. I feel like I'm contributing to that in some way. It's nice to be able to build relationships with both staff and the guests and see them succeed.

Q: Has your perspective on housing and homelessness evolved since you started volunteering at Charter House?

It seems like the news is on a lot when I'm at Charter House. I usually don't watch the news; I like to read it or maybe watch it on my own, not with other people around. But a few weeks ago, there was a group watching the news at Charter House and a story came on about a big hotel that was being put up somewhere. The reactions in the room were all the same: "Why are they building a hotel when they could be building permanent housing?" It opened my eyes to a totally different perspective on daily life, seeing it through their eyes. Before working at Charter House, I wouldn't have given the hotel story much thought.

Hearing the guests share their stories, spending time with them, makes me appreciate how really anybody can become unhoused. All it takes is a series of unfortunate events. And if you're not lucky enough to have family or friends to take you in, that's that.

Q: What do you wish other community members knew or understood about housing and homelessness in Vermont?

I would hope that this would be common sense to a point, but people who are unhoused are just the same as those of us who are housed. We're all individuals. We all have our own stories. We're all New Englanders. But when I was walking through Burlington that day, I was looked at as less than. And that's just not right. Being unhoused comes with a lot of negative assumptions. Sometimes those assumptions are true, but no more than with people who are housed. I hope that's obvious to people. But I feel like it's not.

Q: What would you say to someone who is considering volunteering at Charter House?

I'd encourage them! I feel really comfortable at Charter House and it didn't take me long to feel that way. I started out doing desk duty, but always offered to help the staff on duty with miscellaneous chores. Soon I was helping in the kitchen. Now I go every Thursday, and I have a genuinely good time each time I'm there, even if I've had a hard day at work. I check in, ask what needs to be done, joke around with guests and staff, help make and serve dinner, and then eat with the guests. And then I do my stint in the dish room, which is funny, because when I was growing up I always said, "The one job I never want is to be a dishwasher." But once I started doing dishes at the Charter House, I realized it's not that bad. It's even making me a better person at home. I now do the dishes, although the scale of the task is a little different. Volunteering at Charter House really is a good gig. You get to be a source of some joy for people, and they really appreciate having you there.



WILL ROBINSON

Q: Anything else you would like to share?

How hard-working all the guests at Charter House are. Unhoused people often get an unfair rap and people say they just want a government check, but that's not what I've experienced. The goal is very much to get housed — that's what all the guests are working for with their case managers. It's part of the deal being there. And as much as it's great at the house, they'd all rather be somewhere else. I love hearing their plans for their apartments, the setup, what to put where, when they get a place.

Q: Tell us about your next hiking adventure.

I've hiked the Northeast 115. I've done those a handful of times now, and I've done them all in a single season—winter, summer and fall. So I'm currently wanting to complete a single-season spring. It's been a slow start this spring, but I plan on attempting it. And as far as I know, I'll be the only person to complete the Northeast 115 in all four seasons.

My summer hikes give me a break from both teaching and volunteering but I'm always glad to come back. Each fall I get to know the new names and faces at Charter House and celebrate the guests that have gotten what they needed and moved on.

Are you interested in volunteering at the Charter House Coalition? There are lots of ways to support its clients and its mission, from helping with meal prep and donations to working in its gardens.

Find out more by heading online to chcv.org/want-to-get-involved/volunteer.



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VOLUNTEER WEEK



THERE ARE MANY ways for Addison County residents to lend a hand in their community, and locals got a chance to learn more about several of those opportunities at the Bristol Volunteer Fair held in Holley Hall on April 16. More than 20 organizations from in and around Bristol took part in the event.

Photo courtesy of Meridith McFarland

Fair

(Continued from Page 1C)

to know a new place, she said. “What I like to tell newcomers is the fastest way to make friends and best way to find your community is to volunteer for a group or program that speaks to their heart,” Grover said. “You’re going to find your people and make really great and strong connections.”

Wanting to help new residents engage with the area was part of what led organizers to host the volunteer fair.

“When I met with (Bristol CORE and Bristol Recreation Department leaders) we discussed, ‘What can we do to get these newcomers comfortable with their community or at least get to know people,’ and Bristol has a really great history of volunteerism in the community,” Grover said.

So too does the broader state of Vermont.

Grover referenced the state’s 2025 civic health index, which found that Vermont ranks fifth in the nation for informal helping and 13th for formal volunteerism.

COMMUNITY DRIVERS

But Vermonters might not always know how to get involved in their community. The Bristol Volunteer Fair gave residents an opportunity to meet local organizations looking for helpers, such as Tri-Valley Transit.

Landry said the public transportation provider is always looking for volunteers.

“There’s always a demand, and while we try to do our best that we’re able to, there’s always people we’re unfortunately not able to provide rides to,” she explained.

Tri-Valley Transit works with volunteers based on their schedule and availability, Landry said. Community Rides drivers donate their time and get reimbursed for mileage at the federal rate.

What makes someone a good fit for volunteering with Tri-Valley Transit?

“Anybody who enjoys driving, we do have quite a bit of volunteers who enjoy driving,” Landry said. “(Also), to be sociable. People who enjoy being able to communicate and talk. Some people who don’t mind being quiet. We have a variety of clients that use our transportation, so being able to be flexible and sociable in those ways.”

More on volunteering with Tri-Valley Transit can be found at tinyurl.com/supportvt.

LIBRARY HELPERS

The Lawrence Memorial Library was one of many Bristol organizations at the volunteer fair. Library Director Katie Male-Riordan said there are a lot of different ways volunteers can support the library. One way is by helping with circulation services, maintaining the physical collection in the building.

“(The library looks for) people that might be interested in reshelving books, organizing the collection. Books need to be dusted as they sit on the shelves, as that helps maintain the longevity of the titles,” Male-Riordan said.

Residents can also volunteer with outreach and programming at the

library. That work might interest someone with creative abilities or who has experience in event coordination, Male-Riordan noted. Other things that might make someone a good match for volunteering at Lawrence Memorial Library include passion for the library’s work in the community and making connections.

“It’s such a front-facing position. We’re working with the public quite often, so the thing I really love about this work is it’s a great way to connect and meet other people in your community” Male-Riordan said. “Even if you’re processing and shelving books, there’s people coming in and out of the library all the time.”

Residents can find more information on LML volunteering opportunities at www.lawrencelibraryvt.org/volunteer.

The library got a chance to hear from several residents interested in volunteering at the April 16 fair.

“I think the thing that I really loved about the experience was just the wide variety of people that came up expressing interest in library services and helping with library services,” Male-Riordan said. “We had older adults looking to retire that are looking for a way to continue connecting in the community and using their skill sets to further the organization, teens that were looking for opportunities, totally excited about the chance (to volunteer at the library).”

Bristol Recreation Director Meridith McFarland said around 50 people stopped by the volunteer fair to speak with vendors.

“I think it was a success,” she told the *Independent*. “Most of the feedback we got as people were leaving was a big thank you, and the big takeaway was that for most of the vendors, this was a rarity for them to communicate with similar nonprofits, so it created its own networking opportunity.”

Getting to connect with other local organizations was a highlight of the event for Landry.

“Being able to talk with nonprofits and how we can help one another and there’s other resources out there,” she said. “If we have someone call that we’re not able to help them with a service, I now know of other organizations that I can say, ‘They may be able to help you.’”

GETTING INVOLVED

There aren’t currently any other volunteer fairs scheduled in the area, but Grover acknowledged there’s been some interest in Vergennes and Middlebury.

In the meantime, those wanting to learn more about ways to get involved in the community can reach out to McFarland and Grover for more information.

Residents can also find more information on volunteer opportunities in Addison County at addisoncounty.com/grow-here.

“I think people are not aware of all the organizations that could be even better with volunteer help, especially from the community, and there’s so many people from the community that would love to help out and now they have the hub to go to sign up,” McFarland said.

Guardians

(Continued from Page 1C)

stress when possibly the last thing they would want is a complete stranger stepping in. And even in their oftentimes difficult situations, I have found that kids will still be kids and discovering that firsthand has been both familiar and comforting to me.

So, I look forward to the future possibilities being a GAL will bring me, despite and maybe because of I won’t know exactly what each case will bring and what skills it will call upon, all the while doing my best to find a balance between what size case load I feel comfortable carrying and what the state’s needs are at any given moment.

MIKE GREENWOOD

My GAL journey actually began with a poem, Mary Oliver’s “A Summer Day,” where she asks, “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Having just retired with 35-plus years in education, wondering what’s next and where I might make a positive difference.

Then I read in the Addy Indy’s “By the Way” column the need for Guardian Ad Litem. I thought why not?

The description of being a GAL and being a teacher was not all that disparate as the focus of both was being an advocate for what is best for kids. To be an effective advocate, the description of a GAL said requires building connections and developing trust, something I had experience with. It is for these reasons that I continue to be a GAL.

I attended 32 hours of pre-service training, which



DEBORAH DICKERSON

in many ways. I did home visits with her, court appearances, and school visits.

As a guardian ad litem I am granted the privilege to get to work with kids. Independently I review the facts, work with a variety of stakeholders, from the child’s lawyer, the Department for Children staff, to family members. In Family Court, your opinion and recommendations are sought as you help the court determine what is in the child’s best interest.

However, direct interaction with children is at the core of why I am a GAL. You demonstrate respect and interest in their lives and work to build a level of trust with each child and your relationship with the child begins to have meaning and importance to them. You know when a child is waiting to meet with you, week after week, that making that positive difference is occurring. And that is at the core of my satisfaction of being a guardian ad litem.

DEBORAH DICKERSON

I have been volunteering as a guardian ad litem since late 2017. The seed was planted about 15 years prior when an attorney who represented children shared that there was always a need for more GALs. We were in the locker room after our swim and I thought, “Whatever that is!”

Years later, when my youngest son reached high school, I began prayerfully considering how to reinvest my “mom time.” I had just read attorney Bryan Stevenson’s book “Just Mercy” and realized the importance of having individuals who walk beside a court-involved individual or family in a compassionate and non-judgmental fashion.

It is satisfying to see parents work to improve their lives in order to strengthen their relationships with their children.

Anyone who would like more information on being a guardian ad litem, or who would like to volunteer for the job, should contact Joe Jiloty, Guardian ad Litem Regional Coordinator for Addison, Rutland and Bennington counties by email at joseph.jiloty@vtcourts.gov. More information is also available on the Vermont courts website at www.vermontjudiciary.org/GAL.



RON MONROE

I found difficult as it occurred during COVID and was online. I remember feeling overwhelmed with court jargon and procedures, and I questioned if I had made the right choice.

When I completed the training and was assigned a mentor, all my anxieties of being unable to be an effective GAL were washed away. The mentor component of the training was the application of what I learned in the online course and quickly solidified that I had made the right decision. I was lucky as Linda, my mentor, was patient and wise



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VOLUNTEER WEEK



Peter Beckett

Lake Champlain
Maritime Museum

Peter Beckett, a Middlebury resident, has volunteered as a Boat Shop Volunteer at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum for seven years. In his role, he repairs wooden boats and helps instruct local high school students as they learn boatbuilding skills. Peter says, "Working on wooden boats for me started in 1949 on a New York 30 sailboat, built by Capt. Nat Herreshoff in 1917. Through the years I have built many small boats which added to the skill set which I have today and which I have been sharing with the young



boatbuilders at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum." Peter most enjoys watching boat builders learn new skills and gain self esteem. He has previously volunteered at Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center's Makery and is currently an instructor at Middlebury College, working with students in their Makery Lab.

Mary Bugnaki

Porter Medical Center

Leicester's **Mary Bugnaki** has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for six months as a Greeter. She directs people to Registration and answers questions about hospital locations. Mary enjoys volunteering because she loves meeting people and hopes to be helpful



in any way she can.

Wylie Cate

HOPE

Wylie Cate, of Salisbury, has volunteered for 4 years doing egg pickup for HOPE. She enjoys the interaction with all of the staff at both the farms and HOPE. Wylie also volunteers at her kids' schools and the MSSC Board.



Vanda Crook

Homeward Bound

Vanda Crook, a Middlebury resident, has been volunteering in the surgery department at Homeward Bound for 1.5 years. She supports the spay and neuter staff and finds fulfillment in "helping the OR staff and helping the cats and dogs feel safe and loved."



Dick Cuyler

Porter Medical Center

Middlebury's **Dick Cuyler** has volunteered with Porter Medical Center's Palliative Support Services for 1.5 years. Having previously volunteered as a bereavement companion, he is currently matched with a couple of residents who are receiving palliative support and is providing companionship at Helen Porter Rehabilitation & Nursing. He enjoys interacting with the residents, focusing on what they say and keeping the conversation



light. He notes, "If I can get them laughing, I really feel great." Dick spends each Wednesday helping build houses for Habitat for Humanity, which he's done locally for 5 years and about 25 years with other chapters.

Bob Davis

Homeward Bound

Bob Davis, a Bristol resident, has been volunteering as a dog walker at Homeward Bound, Addison County's Humane Society, for just over a year. He typically walks and plays fetch with the dogs, but sometimes simply offers companionship to those that need it. "I love dogs! I can't believe they let me spend time with the dogs and don't charge me (don't let them know that)," Bob jokes. He



adds that no matter what's happening in his own life, the shelter is a bright spot filled with kind, positive people—and, of course, dogs. "In a crazy world, this is a welcome oasis."

Norman Beerman

Porter Medical Center

Norm Beerman, of Salisbury, has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for six years, where he sorts mail in the mailroom and also helps at the Greeter Station. There, he welcomes patients and visitors, offering assistance to help them find their way. Norm says the best part of volunteering is the



people—he's made many new friends through the experience.

David Bishop

Tri-Valley Transit

David Bishop of Goshen has been a volunteer driver for Tri-Valley Transit for over nine years, providing transportation for Addison County residents for medical and personal needs. He finds the work deeply meaningful, sharing, "Knowing that myself and the team at Tri Valley Transit are making a difference and meeting so many diverse and interesting individuals" is what he enjoys most.



A longtime resident of Goshen, where he and his family have lived for over 30 years, David has also been actively involved in various town committees and the school board.

Margot Brown

HOPE

Margot Brown, of East Middlebury, has dedicated 2 years as a Clothing Mender at HOPE. She feels good about the work HOPE does and finds fulfillment in mending clothing that would otherwise be unsalable.



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VOLUNTEER WEEK



Karen DeMoy

Orwell Free Library

Karen DeMoy has been a trustee at Orwell Free Library for 20 years. Throughout her tenure she served as the secretary for the board and worked tirelessly to make the library a welcoming and professionally run organization to best serve the Orwell community. Karen is the driving force behind the library's annual Plant Sale that raises over half of the library's operating budget. Every year she connects with growers from around the region, starts veggies and flowers in her greenhouse, and digs huge amount of perennials to obtain a beautiful spread of plants to sell. According to library director, Kate Hunter, "The sale is beloved



by those that frequent it. Without Karen, this incredibly successful fundraiser wouldn't happen in the organized and extensive level we all love...She is a force in our community." Karen also recently became a Master Gardener with the Extension Service and now oversees the Orwell Community Learning Garden in collaboration with Orwell Village School and Orwell Free Library.

Mildred Denney

Porter Medical Center

Mildred Denney, of Brandon, has been a dedicated volunteer at Porter Medical Center for 28 years, serving as a Greeter. She welcomes visitors, delivers staff lunches to support the busy Emergency Department, and enjoys meeting new people and making friends. Mildred says she always feels safe at the hospital and finds it a wonderful place



to volunteer. She has also volunteered at Neat Repeats Resale Shop for the same impressive length of time.

Brooke Dolan

Porter Medical Center

Brooke Dolan, of Middlebury, has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for 1.5 years as a Care Assistant and Med/Surg helper. She supports the nursing team by helping patients access resources, documenting food intake, sanitizing equipment, restocking supplies, and serving as a patient companion and sitter. Brooke says, "I enjoy most the feeling that I am making someone's day brighter, easier, or more enjoyable by my actions." She values connecting with patients and hearing their stories.



Outside of Porter, Brooke has volunteered for 2.5 years with the Charter House Coalition, where she leads Saturday Dinners with a student group, and recently began volunteering as a Spanish interpreter for the Open Door Clinic.

Elizabeth

Homeward Bound

Elizabeth, of Lincoln, has been volunteering with Homeward Bound for 3 years, helping to socialize cats and small animals to improve their chances of finding forever homes. She particularly enjoys playing with the animals during her time at the shelter. Elizabeth has also been a volunteer



at the Lincoln Library for about 5 years.

Carter Emilio

Homeward Bound

Middlebury's **Carter Emilio** has been volunteering at Homeward Bound for 1.5 years, spending time in Cat Land visiting and playing with cats, rabbits, and other small animals. He most enjoys seeing all the cats and people who work there.



John Fallon

HOPE

John Fallon, of Weybridge, has volunteered for an impressive 12 years providing Food Shelf Inventory Control at HOPE. Assisting households in need, young families, or seniors is something he takes pride in.



Kim Farnham

Porter Medical Center

New Haven's **Kim Farnham** has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for seven years as a Chairperson and Patient Family Advisor. In this role, she helps guide Porter and UVM Hospital on how to better serve the local community. Kim says, "I enjoy giving back to this wonderful community that I call home!" In addition to her work at Porter, she



has served as Chairperson of the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center school board for 15 years.

Teri Fitzgerald

MAUSD Mentoring Program



Monkton's **Teri Fitzgerald** has been a mentor with the MAUSD Mentoring program since 2017. She started with a first-grade student who is now in eighth grade, and their lasting friendship continues despite seeing each other less frequently. Teri also mentors a third-grade student, meeting weekly to share activities, games, crafts, and support. She says, "What I enjoy most about being a mentor is the relationship that develops over time between me as a community member and the mentee as a young person who comes to trust in an adult outside of their family that is special to them, celebrates successes, and helps them navigate difficult times."

Teri values the special bond that develops with her mentees. In addition to mentoring, Teri serves on the boards for several community organizations including the Monkton Friends Methodist Church, the Monkton Ridge Church Association, the Monkton Museum and Historical Society, and the Addison County Retired Educators Association. She is also the steward of the Monkton Little Free Pantry, coordinates the Bristol Recreation Department offerings for volleyball and pickleball, and serves as a member of the sub-committee of the Monkton Recreation Committee working on bringing hardcourts for basketball and pickleball to Morse Park.

Our community is stronger because of the work that you do.

Thank you for volunteering!

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Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History

Do you have an interest in Addison County and Vermont history?

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| Kathleen Jewett | Bill Sessions |
| Ann Kensek | and |
| Tom Munschauer | Ciara Murphy |

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VOLUNTEER WEEK



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VOLUNTEER WEEK



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 Laura, Aaron & Zeldia Smith
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 Kathleen Smith
 Tom Smith
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 Christie Sumner
 Cindy Sumner
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 Stephanie Sweeney
 Rose & Lily Swinton
 Elizabeth, Jude, Franklin, &
 Hendrix Sylvia
 Adele Szilardi
 Nikky Sztachelski
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 Carolyn Tallen
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 Jordan Young
 Deborah Young
 Amy Young
 Pat Zeliff
 Carrie Zeno
 Kai Zhang
 Alexis Zhao
 Lance Zimmerman
 Ty Zimmerman





VOLUNTEER WEEK



Ellen Flight HomeShare Vermont

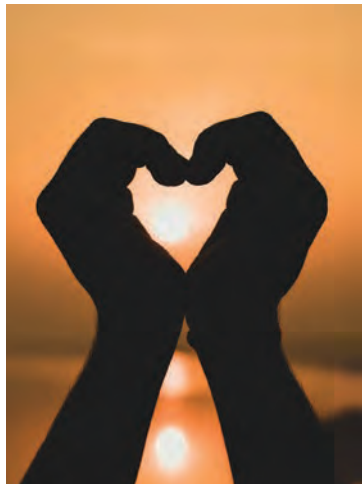
Middlebury's **Ellen Flight** has been a staff volunteer with HomeShare Vermont for two years. In her role, she interviews potential homeshare hosts and guests, facilitates introductions and matches, and provides ongoing support. Ellen says, "It feels good knowing that I am helping someone and that we are doing our part to help with the housing situation in Addison County." In



addition to recently joining the HomeShare Vermont Board of Directors, Ellen has been active in the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society for over 25 years.

Teancum Forbes HOPE

Teancum Forbes, of Middlebury, has been a Food Shelf Assistant at HOPE for 3 months. He is driven by the desire to help those in need. Teancum also volunteers at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.



Darlene Fountain Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes

Darlene Fountain, of Vergennes, has been volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes for three months, where she cooks for the club members. She loves the laid-back atmosphere, saying it makes it easy to connect with others. "The fun and engaging interactions with both staff and youth create a welcoming environment," she shares.



Her passion for cooking allows her to share meals, teach skills, and bring people together in meaningful ways.

Aidan Gardner Willowell Foundation

Lincoln's **Aidan Gardner** is an ECO AmeriCorps member serving at the Willowell Foundation in Monkton, VT. He is partway through his 2nd year of service with Willowell, and focuses on supporting the Pond Brook Middle School, The Walden Year high school program, the community garden, and camps. During a typical day, Aidan will support teachers at these programs, coordinate and lead outdoor activities/lessons, or bring students on field trips of interest. He also co-leads Willowell's adventure-



focused summer camps for children ages 7-12. According to his supervisor, Tasha Ball, "Aidan is a team player with a big heart and a warm smile. He's also an alumni of the Walden Project, and hopefully a Willowell 'lifer' in some capacity."



Garland Gates Vermont Adult Learning

Bristol's **Garland Gates** is a teacher and tutor at Vermont Adult Learning (VAL), where he has been volunteering since September 2024. Prior to moving to Vermont, he spent 25 years teaching and coordinating a two-county GED program in Ohio. At VAL, Garland works one-on-one with students to help them prepare for the GED test, tailoring instruction based on their individual academic levels. He finds joy in seeing students' academic progress and appreciates working with the caring VAL team. Garland also volunteers



at the New Haven Congregational Church Food Closet, which provides food assistance to local residents, including a monthly "Meat & More" program. He began volunteering there in May 2024, driven by concerns about food insecurity in our community.

Rita Glidden HOPE

Rita Glidden, from Cornwall, has been a Food Shelf Assistant at HOPE for 7 years. Knowing she is making a difference and working alongside great people are her favorite parts of volunteering.



Donald Guptill Porter Medical Center

Cornwall's **Donald Guptill** has been volunteering for two years at both Porter Medical Center and Helen Porter. He serves as a Greeter for outpatient services and as a Patient Companion, visiting with nursing home residents. Donald says, "I enjoy helping people with directions to services and answering any questions they have. As a patient companion, I enjoy listening to the life experiences that people have." He finds the



stories people share to be especially meaningful. In addition to his volunteer work at Porter, Donald has also supported the Cornwall Fire Department through fundraising efforts

Alem Hadzic Porter Medical Center

Alem Hadzic, of Middlebury, has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for 1.5 years as a Care Support volunteer in the Emergency Department. In this role, he provides emotional support and comfort to patients facing stress and anxiety through compassionate communication. "It truly is incredible to experience how lending an ear to somebody who is experiencing hardships can help them through their treatment and even forget about it momentarily," Alem shares. A pre-med student



at Middlebury College, he hopes to carry these experiences into his future career in medicine. In addition to his work at Porter, Alem has also launched a fundraising campaign for the Red Cross in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to help support underserved communities.

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VOLUNTEER WEEK



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Tucker Hale
HOPE

For the past 3 months, **Tucker Hale**, who lives in Middlebury, has served as a Food Shelf Assistant at HOPE. Helping people out is something he finds rewarding. Additionally, Tucker has volunteered at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 6 months.



Mary Anne Hoff
Porter Medical Center

Mary Anne Hoff, of Bristol, has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for seven years as a Greeter. She welcomes visitors, helps guide them to their destinations, and delivers breakfast meals to the Emergency Department staff. Mary Anne enjoys spending time in the lobby, visiting with people while they wait for appointments. She enjoys talking with people and trying



to make them smile. Volunteering at Porter allows her to share stories, learn about others, and reconnect with old friends.

Tom Hanley
Project Independence/
Elderly Services, Inc.

Middlebury's **Tom Hanley** has been involved with Project Independence/Elderly Services, Inc. for 23 years, initially starting in 2002 when Paul Vachon invited him and his daughter to perform for the participants. Tom recalls being overwhelmed by the joy the project brought to the lives of seniors, which inspired his continued involvement. "To be an ancillary part of Project in those early years was invigorating and I found a new appreciation and respect for the work they do," he says. Over time, he not only performed for the seniors but also provided counsel on safety issues through his role with



the police department. When the opportunity arose to join the Board of Directors, he eagerly accepted, seeing it as a way to contribute more directly to an organization that brings joy, hope, and service to seniors. "Living and working in Middlebury these past 34 years, I had come to know many of the participants and to be able to engage with them at this stage of their journey is very rewarding."

Evelyn Howard
HOPE

Evelyn Howard, of Weybridge, has volunteered for 13 months as a Textile Processor at Marion's Place (HOPE). Social connections and the chance to reduce wasteful treatment of useful and viable resources are important to her.



JOANNE SCOTT
COUNSELING SERVICE OF
ADDISON COUNTY (CSAC)

CSAC applauds Joanne Scott for her 30 years of service to CSAC's Board of Directors. Joanne has acted as Board Treasurer for over 25 years, providing leadership in several financial oversight teams. After graduating from Middlebury College, she worked in NYC and Tokyo for Morgan Stanley & Co., then embarked on her career teaching business and finance at St. Michael's College. A resident of New Haven, Joanne is a golfer, cross-country skier, and enormously proud mother. She is one of CSAC's strongest advocates: prepared, collaborative, knowledgeable, sharp with the numbers, and always positive. Thank you, Joanne!

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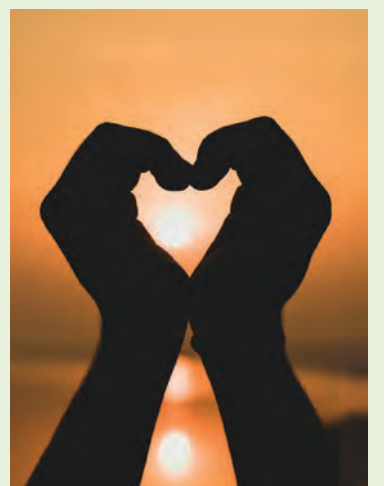
Anne Hardway
HOPE

Anna Hardway, a Middlebury local, has dedicated 13 years to providing food shelf customer service at HOPE. Meeting people is what brings her joy. She has also volunteered at the Congregational Church of Middlebury for 12 years.



Dan Kane
HOPE

Dan Kane, residing in Cornwall, has generously given 1.5 years to unloading the delivery truck at HOPE's food shelf. Supporting an organization that fulfills a critical need for local community members is important to him. In addition, Dan serves on the board at Otter Creek Child Center.



Middlebury College students are matched with kids aged 6-12 in the community to serve as Community Friends mentors. Pictured here are mentees and mentors spending time together during their matching event, which is held every fall and spring.

THANK YOU!

Students, Faculty, Staff, and Community Partners for your continued dedication to strengthening communities around the globe.

-The Center for Community Engagement



Fred Hoff
Porter Medical Center

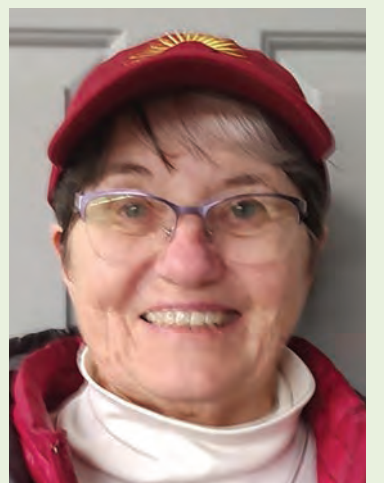
Fred Hoff, a Bristol resident, has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center for seven years as a Greeter. He welcomes patients and visitors, helps direct them to the services they need, and often spends time chatting with them while they wait for appointments. He also helps by collecting mail and cleaning wheelchairs after use. Fred says, "I really enjoy meeting and talking with everyone in the front lobby..."



It is really wonderful to make these social connections." He values the friendships formed through his volunteer work and the chance to reconnect with familiar faces.

Linda Kelton
HOPE

Linda Kelton, from East Middlebury, has volunteered for 2 years as a Clothing Mender at HOPE. Helping to increase sales and enabling HOPE to achieve its community goals is something she enjoys. (It's also fun!) In her spare time, Linda also volunteers at Porter Hospital, Wellspring



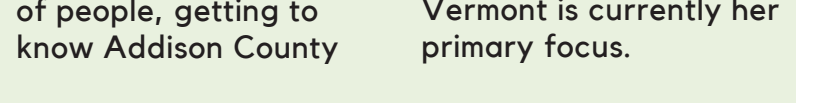
Singers, and knits baby blankets.

Connie Kenna
HomeShare Vermont

Constance "Connie" Kenna, of Middlebury, has been a dedicated staff volunteer with HomeShare Vermont for nearly 20 years. In her role, she interviews potential homeshare hosts and guests, helps facilitate introductions and matches, and provides ongoing support throughout the homeshare process. Connie loves hearing the life stories of so many different types of people, getting to know Addison County



more deeply, and contributing in a small way to alleviating the local housing crisis. While she has volunteered in many capacities over the years, HomeShare Vermont is currently her primary focus.





VOLUNTEER WEEK



Bill Kingston

Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes

Bill Kingston, of Middlebury, has been volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes for two years. His focus is on building connections with the youth, getting to know them, and offering encouragement. For Bill, the most rewarding part is the student



connections he's able to make through his involvement.

Anne Lindert

Porter Medical Center

Anne Lindert, of Vergennes, has been volunteering as a Greeter at Porter Medical Center for two years. She welcomes visitors and helps guide them to their destinations within the hospital. Anne says, "Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose." She especially enjoys making new friends with



her fellow volunteers through her work.

Marie Lennon

Porter Medical Center

Marie Lennon, a Middlebury resident, has been volunteering as a Greeter at both Porter Medical Center and Helen Porter for two years. She welcomes visitors and helps direct them to their destinations. Marie, a retired nurse with 22 years of experience, says, "I really missed the interaction with people. I wish I had started volunteering way before



I did; it has actually given me purpose." She would recommend volunteering to anyone who is looking for something to keep them busy.

Mary Longey

Town Hall Theater

Middlebury's Mary Longey has volunteered as Town Hall Theater's Resident Stage Manager for fifteen years. Mary gives tours to new visitors and school age children. She is a self taught techie, with a range of skills from setting up sound & lights and sets for performances, to smaller tasks such as setting up a microphone for the Memorial Day Parade speaker. According to Erin Jones-Poppe, Operations Director at the theater, "She sees something that needs to be done around the theater, such as emptying the trash and mopping the stage, and she just does it. Stepping in to watch the box office and sell tickets in order to give the Box



Office manager a chance to take lunch. Need a Front of House Manager? Need something from the post office? Need a sweet pick me up such as freshly bake brownies or short bread? Mary is your person. Nothing is below her. She takes a lot of pride in the theater as a building and as a community place to teach and learn." Mary is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to THT, and wants to help spread that knowledge to those in the community.

Kathy Mackey

HOPE

Kathy Mackey, from Middlebury, has dedicated "many years" as an Inventory Sorter at Marion's Place (HOPE). Working with wonderful individuals and witnessing the incredible items donated by our generous community are what she loves about volunteering. Besides her work at HOPE, Kathy



has served as a Guardian Ad Litem for ten years.

Rux Martin

HOPE

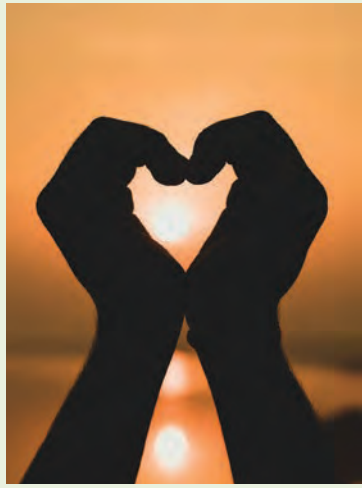
Rux Martin, a Ferrisburgh resident, has contributed 5 years of service providing Food Shelf Customer Service at HOPE. She finds it deeply satisfying to provide people with food and delights in exchanging recipe ideas.



Denny May

HOPE

Denny May, a New Haven resident, has volunteered for about a year providing Food Delivery at HOPE. He appreciates being involved with an organization that does critical work serving those in need, and he values that the food shelf connects local businesses and farmers. He notes, "It doesn't hurt that everyone I know who is associated with the organization is stellar: wonderful people who are a delight to work with and get to



know better." He also volunteers with the Open Door Clinic, Addison Allies, Elderly Services, the food program at the Congregational Church, and Beeman Elementary School. He also served with Meals on Wheels for about six months.

Virginia Mazzoni

Porter Medical Center

Middlebury's Virginia (Gin) Mazzoni has been volunteering as a Greeter in the Radiology department at Porter Medical Center for five months. She greets patients, checks them into the waiting room, provides them with gowns and basic information, and offers a comforting chat, especially when they're feeling nervous. She says, "A tiny chat about the weather/the book they're reading/how lovely their scarf is can lighten up the tension." Gin enjoys the human interaction that goes along with volunteering, both with patients and colleagues, and finds joy in connecting with the staff and their families. Gin claims, "I'm a shy but sunny person, and I know that everyone's fighting battles we know nothing about every day - so I try my best to welcome everyone with a warm



smile, make them feel as comfortable as possible and reassure them if they happen to be worried, even about things that could seem irrelevant. It requires a minimum effort and it's uncanny how much difference it can make. So far, it's worked 100% of the time!" Gin has been volunteering in different contexts (and countries) since she was in her twenties. Currently, she's also volunteering with Age Well, and has been doing that for two years, regularly visiting the same client (whom she now considers a dear friend).

VOLUNTEERS, WE SALUTE YOU!

We thank the many dedicated volunteers from our community serving with Middlebury Regional EMS and salute all volunteer first responders across the State of Vermont!



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VOLUNTEER WEEK




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Anne McMenamin
HomeShare Vermont

Ripton's **Anne McMenamin** has been volunteering with HomeShare Vermont for a year as a staff volunteer. She interviews potential homeshare hosts and guests, facilitates introductions and matches, and provides ongoing support. Anne says, "I most enjoy the personal work of getting to know the hosts and guests and trying to make a difference in



their lives by making the best match." In addition to her work with HomeShare Vermont, she also volunteers at Ilsley Library.


Juniper Nardiello Smith
Bristol Mentors

Bristol's **Juniper Nardiello Smith** has volunteered with Bristol Mentors for 1.5 years. She meets with her elementary school aged mentee biweekly. They eat pizza, play games, go for walks, share LOTS of giggles and generally really enjoy each other. They also share custody of their imaginary unicorn, Pinkie Pie. Juniper says, "I love to volunteer because it is so mutually beneficial. I get to be there for somebody that needs a friend and as much wisdom as I try to



impart on her, I wouldn't be surprised if she is really the one teaching me. I love having the opportunity to view the world from such a beautiful, fearless, curious mind. It is inspirational and I am a better person because my mentee is in my life!"

Thank you,
Addison County
Volunteers
for working so hard
for our community!



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Gardner Merriam
HOPE

Gardner Merriam, from New Haven, has volunteered for 3 years, providing Food Shelf Customer Service at HOPE. He enjoys meeting both the people who utilize HOPE and those who work there, describing them as "great!" Gardner has also delivered dinners at community suppers at the Middlebury



Congregational Church for approximately 3 years.

Mike Nason
Lincon Mentors/HOPE



Lincoln's **Mike Nason** has volunteered with Lincoln Mentors for the last decade. He was the first mentor with the program and has mentored three local students over the past 10 years. Mike enjoys pursuing shared interests with his current mentee. They have fallen into a time tested routine that always starts with a hearty snack, followed by some sports (tossing a football or raucous game of Slamo) and then some drawing or cooking together. While things are in the oven, they pick

up where they left off in the latest classic novel they have been reading over the course of several months. Mike's mentee appreciates Mike's time with him and his dog, Liddy, and likes seeing him on the sidelines at his hockey games. In addition to his work with Lincoln Mentors, Mike was also on the HOPE board for 6 years and has served as a HOPE Food Shelf Delivery Driver for seven years. He is also currently the president of Norwich University's Friends of the Library.

We are grateful for all
volunteers who help
our community grow
strong!



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www.RainbowVT.com

Liana Merrill
Porter Medical Center

Liana Merrill, of Middlebury, has volunteered with Porter Medical Center's Palliative Support Services for 1 year. Her volunteer work includes helping with activities at Helen Porter Rehabilitation & Nursing, providing companionship to residents, sitting vigil with end-of-life patients, and singing with the Wellspring Singers hospice group. She finds joy in seeing the residents' faces light up and hearing their stories. It makes her day knowing she is able to give them some cheer. She notes that most of the residents



grew up in Vermont, and she loves hearing their stories and memories of their upbringing in this beautiful state. Liana also volunteers as an outings leader with the Green Mountain Club (8 years), at the Dead Creek Visitor Center (7 years), and as a trail and kiosk steward with the Middlebury Area Land Trust (4 years).



We enjoy our volunteer time
and thank all hard working volunteers!

| | | | |
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[the real estate experts good to know!](https://www.facebook.com/real-estate-experts-good-to-know/)

Rick Miller
HOPE

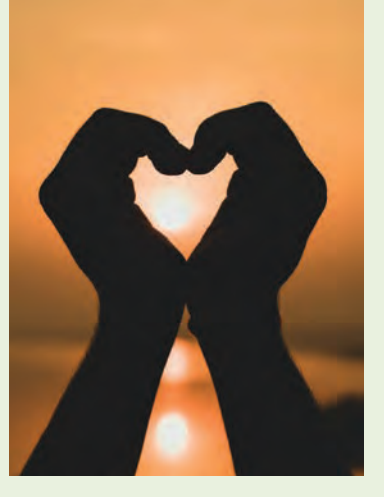
Rick Miller, a resident of Middlebury, has contributed 6 years of service at HOPE, providing Food Shelf Customer Service. The interaction with clients and the opportunity to give back to the community are what he enjoys most. Rick has also volunteered at St.



Mary's Church for 3 years.

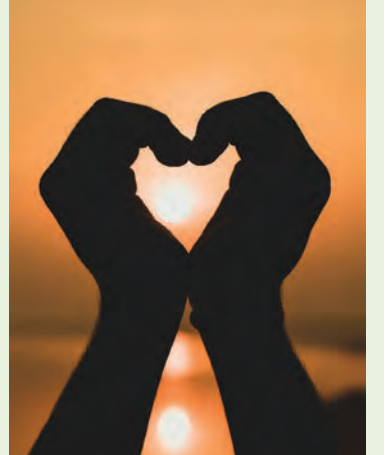
Ginie Olson
HOPE

Ginie Olson, from Ferrisburgh, has been a Holiday Shop Helper at HOPE for over a year. She enjoys collaborating with other dedicated volunteers who are committed to making a difference in Addison County.



Faith Parkins
HOPE

Salisbury's **Faith Parkins** has dedicated 10 years to volunteering as the Holiday Shop Coordinator at HOPE. She finds joy in interacting with clients and contributing to the community. For the past year, Faith has also lent her time to Neat Repeats.



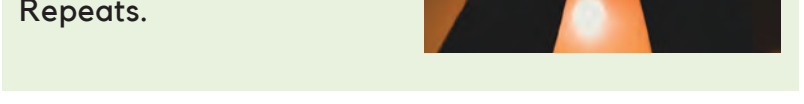
Thanks for the miles and smiles!

TVT's Volunteer Drivers are on the road nearly every day in every town in the county. They provide rides to vital services and companionship along the way.

Thank you Volunteers - you make our community great!



If you have a car and a little spare time you can be a hometown hero, too! Call 802-388-2287.





VOLUNTEER WEEK



Donna Patterson Porter Medical Center

Donna Patterson of Vergennes has been volunteering at Porter Medical Center and Helen Porter for four years. On Wednesdays, she helps with Bingo, and on Fridays, she covers the front desk. Donna says, "It makes my week to help the people and make them smile. We joke around, we laugh, and I pick them up when



they are down. Making people happy is all I want to do."

Susan Perine HOPE

Susan Perine, of Middlebury, has volunteered for 1.5 years as Holiday Shop Staff and Administrative Assistant at HOPE. She enjoys connecting with others, contributing to the community, and helping those in need.



Nancy Rucker Henry Sheldon Museum

Longtime Sheldon Museum volunteer, Nancy Rucker, claims that "nobody knows" just how long she's been volunteering at the Sheldon, but she estimates it's been just shy of fifty years. Nancy enjoys the museum's rich history and claims it has "sucked her in." She also has an affinity for the museum's namesake, Henry, stating, "He was so interesting and curious about everything. I recognize his foibles and limitations, as part of him and his time, but he was truly so unique. One of the things I love most about Henry is that his handwriting is legible, which for the 19th century is amazing. There are a great deal of important writing and documents that are just so hard to



read, but Henry's writing is very clear." Currently, Nancy is working on chronologically sorting a collection of (mostly undated) letters between a Civil War soldier and his sisters, one of whom lived in Shoreham. She encourages others to volunteer at the museum, noting that there's a wealth of interesting projects to get involved in, and the staff provides strong support for volunteers pursuing their passions.

Breaking ground

MEMBERS OF THE volunteer Cornwall Outdoor Recreation Area committee marked a milestone in their work by breaking ground on the 2-acre site just south of Bingham Memorial School on April 13. Shown from left are Meg Harris, Stan Gryzb, Gail Isenberg, Tanya Byker (Cornwall selectboard), Andrea Landsberg, Woody Jackson, Marge Drexler and Mike Winslow (Addison County Regional Planning Commission).

Photo by Sue Johnson



Pam Rushton Porter Medical Center

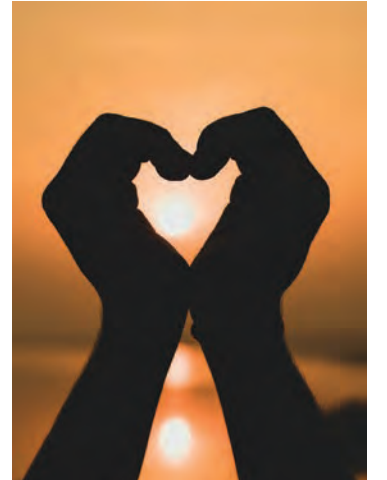
Pam Rushton, of Brandon, has been volunteering as a Greeter at Porter Medical Center for two years. As one of the first people patients encounter when they arrive, she enjoys seeing familiar faces and helping them feel welcome. Pam says, "It makes you feel good to do something for others... the group of volunteers is like a small family."



She values the kindness of the hospital staff and the strong sense of community among the volunteers.

Santo Santoriello HOPE

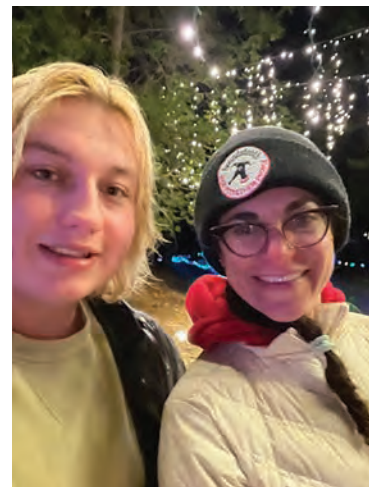
Santo Santoriello, of Bristol, has been a volunteer at HOPE for three years. He also delivers for Meals on Wheels, is helping a family de-clutter their home, and donates hundreds of pounds of homegrown produce to local food shelves. Over the years, he has donated more than two gallons of blood and shares unique fruits—like paw paws, persimmons,



northern kiwi, and oriental pears—as well as nut and fruit tree seedlings with others.

Debbie Safran MAUSD Mentoring Program

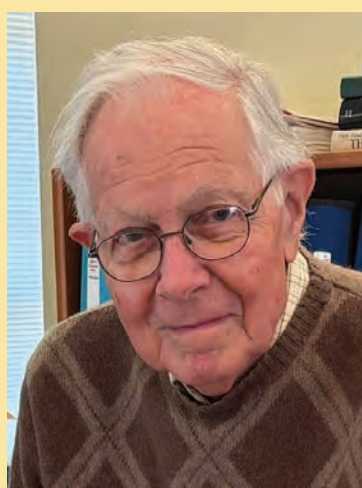
Starksboro's Debbie Safran has been a volunteer with Mt. Abe Mentoring since 2016. According to Mentorship Coordinator, Jacob Freedman, "Her mentee is graduating high school this year and we are so proud of all they've done together. From the Houndstooth Chase Away 5k to weekly catchups about music, theater, and all things pop culture, these two have built a amazing



connection together over the years and are a true testament to the power of mentoring." Debbie and her mentee have been paired for an inspiring eight years!

Ron Rucker Henry Sheldon Museum

Ron Rucker has been volunteering at the Sheldon Museum for the past 5 or 6 years, after initially volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. He likes the museum's inviting atmosphere, where he can contribute in a variety of ways. "I enjoy being useful and I appreciate the recognition from the museum staff of the skills and abilities that I can offer," he shares. As a former librarian, Ron has worked on book organization projects and also helped with facilities tasks, such as painting the porch. Currently, he's focused on smaller projects around the museum, following a major undertaking of organizing the book



collection, which included weeding, subject matter organization, and some cataloguing, often collaborating with Middlebury College student interns. Ron echoes his wife (and longtime Sheldon volunteer), Nancy's, sentiment about the importance of staying connected to the community through volunteer work at the museum.



4-H Leaders Who Are Shaping Our Future

If you see them say Thank You!



The University of Vermont Extension wants to thank our 4-H leaders, volunteers and Addison 4-H Foundation directors who dedicate hours of time and energy to the 4-H Youth Program in Addison County. These volunteers are the core of the 4-H Youth Program: the very reason for over 100 years of success!

Becky Allen
Joe Allen
Janelle Ashley
Ashley Audet
Nancy Audet
Courtney Banach
Sonya Barber

Tara Barber
Laurie Bertrand
Gavin Bicknell
Victor Bolduc
Louise Bowdish
Kelsey Bradford
John Chamberlin

Jason Charest
Jacqueline Chase
Warren Chase
Kylie Chittenden
Makayla Davis
Elaine Desforges
Tina Evens-Wright

Lise Fifield
Tricia Foster
Susan Gilmore
Pam Gevry
Scott Gordon
Melanie Harrison
Jeanette Hill
Kendra Hutchins
Jake Jacobs
Brian Kayhart
Cindy Kayhart
Cassandra Kennett
Jennifer Kennett
Kathy Kennett
Renee LaCoss
Laura Lalumiere
Heather Layn
Bailee Layn-Gordon

Jeff Lester
Dawn Livingston
Karissa Livingston
Sadie Moulton
Kathy Nisun
Diane Norris
Barbara Palmer
Sharlena Payne
Michelle Perlee
Janet Piper
Becky Plouffe
Michael Plouffe
Susan Quesnel
Abby Reen
Kristina Reen
Patrick Reen
Abby Roleau
Maggie Rollins

Tammy Sauve
Martha Seifert
Robin Severy
Ashley Severy-Audet
Melinda Siel
Karri Smith
Shelly Smith
Wendy Smith
Samantha Sturtevant
Wendy Swanson
Brittany Trudo
Jill Wade
Kristy Whipple
Cady White
Maureen Whitney
Stephanie Wilbur
Anna Willenbaker



University of Vermont
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VOLUNTEER WEEK



Sheri Sullivan *Open Door Clinic*

Middlebury's **Sheri Sullivan** has been an office volunteer at Open Door Clinic for the past year. A former chef and founder of the nonprofit Dinners with Love, Sheri supports clinic staff by managing patient records and has recently led an initiative to stock the clinic's free pantry with culturally appropriate foods for Jamaican patients. Her work reflects her deep understanding of the importance of food in promoting health and comfort. Susannah McCandless,



Communications and Volunteer Coordinator, says, "We enjoy the energy, expertise and commitment that Sheri brings to her volunteer work with Open Door Clinic, and the way she has expanded how well and thoughtfully we serve our patients!"

Patrick Snow *Brandon Area Food Shelf*

Brandon's **Patrick Snow** has volunteered with the Brandon Area Food Shelf for two years. He greets and assists visitors, receive donations, stocks shelves, and advises the food shelf administrator when supplies are running low. He has also volunteered with the Brandon United



Methodist Church for two years.

Deb Tetreault *Quarry Hill School*

Deb Tetreault, of Middlebury, has been volunteering at Quarry Hill School as a Friday Volunteer for several years. She is known for her reliability, warmth, and helpfulness. Erin Davis, who nominated Deb, praises her for the positive impact she has on the classroom environment. Deb's dedication and support



make her an invaluable part of the school community.

Emma Sekercan *Willowell Foundation*

Emma Sekercan, of Huntington, is a VHCBAmeriCorps member serving at the Willowell Foundation in Bristol, VT. She's currently in the middle of a one year, full-time, term with Willowell. She spends her days at Wren's Nest Forest Preschool hiking, reading books, making healthy snacks, and being a team player. At Wren's Nest, Emma helps the other teachers deliver outdoor early childhood curriculum, through hikes and nature exploration in



the surrounding woods and fields. In the summer, Emma will co-lead Willowell's outdoor summer camps for children ages 4-6. She is creative and caring and brings fabulous energy to Wren's Nest Forest Preschool.

Jodi Thompson *Porter Medical Center*

New Haven's **Jodi Thompson** has been volunteering as a Greeter at Porter Medical Center for 16 years. She greets visitors, directs them to their destinations, and often chats with people while they wait in the lobby. Jodi also knits baby hats for the Birthing Center. She says, "I enjoy being a sense of calm to those who come to the hospital



because it can be a very stressful place." For Jodi, the best part of volunteering is connecting with the people she meets.

Abigail Sessions *HomeShare Vermont*

Abigail Sessions, of Weybridge, has been a staff volunteer with HomeShare Vermont for 2 years. She helps interview potential homeshare hosts and guests, facilitates introductions and matches, and offers ongoing support throughout the process. Abigail shares, "What I enjoy is helping to make a small dent in the housing shortage and seeing people who



really appreciate the companionship of living together." She also volunteers at Gather and through the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society.

Val Tilford *HOPE*

Val Tilford, from Middlebury, has been a welcoming face as a Receptionist at HOPE for 8 years. Working with wonderful people and meeting new individuals she can assist is something she truly appreciates.



Paul Smith *Tri-Valley Transit*

Paul Smith has been a Volunteer Driver with Tri-Valley Transit for three years. In his role, he transports residents to their medical appointments as well as providing other transportation needs. He says his favorite thing about volunteering is, "Meeting and helping the



amazing array of folks we transport."

Steve Webb *Porter Medical Center*

Steve Webb, of Middlebury, has been volunteering as a Greeter at Porter Medical Center for 23 years. He welcomes visitors, answers their questions, and helps direct them to where they need to go. Steve aims to make people feel at ease, understanding how intimidating a hospital visit can be. Regarding his favorite aspect of volunteering, he says, "Meeting the people! Meeting patients



and staff and other volunteers!" Steve also volunteers weekly at the Congregational Church of Middlebury, helping with their weekly dinners.



Here you go!

VOLUNTEERS FROM THE Middlebury Union Middle School cross country team hand out water at the checkpoint on Morgan Horse Farm Road in Weybridge during this past October's Middlebury Maple Run. The event, a combined 5K, 10K and half-marathon race staged in Middlebury and Weybridge annually since 2009, attracts hundreds of runners and their family and friends to Addison County. It boosts the local economy and makes this a nicer place to live. But it couldn't be done without support from volunteers who do everything from set up the course to hand out awards. Find out how to volunteer online at www.middleburymaplerun.com.

Independent photo

Matthew Witten *Starksboro Mentoring Program*

Starksboro's **Matthew Witten** has volunteered with the Starksboro Mentoring program for six months. "I love being part of the Robinson School community and seeing how my mentee navigates that community. Kids' group dynamics are fascinating! Also, my mentee and I have a great time together - he is curious and interested in



learning," Matthew says. In addition to mentoring, he also volunteers with the Starksboro food share program.

Lauren Wright *HOPE*

Lauren Wright, of Middlebury, has spent 4 years volunteering to provide food shelf customer service at HOPE. She finds pleasure in engaging in conversations with both clients and staff.



Deborah Young *HOPE*

Deborah Young, of New Haven, has volunteered for 3 years providing Food Shelf Client Service at HOPE. The people she encounters, the community that is formed, and the ability to help mitigate food insecurity are what she loves about volunteering. For about a decade, Deborah has also volunteered at the



Charter House Coalition/Community suppers.





VOLUNTEER WEEK



Volunteering enriches civic life in Vermont

The 2025 Vermont Civic Health Index, which was released earlier this year, offers a look at the state's civic life, revealing considerable strengths as well as areas for growth across six key domains. The Index also spotlights some of the organizations that offer unique support for civic health across the state and presents original data from the Vermont Youth Civic Health Survey.

Vermonters rank high in crucial areas of civic health such as helping neighbors, attending public meetings, participating in groups, and staying well informed. Meanwhile, findings regarding Vermont's youth, people of color, and other groups offer insights about how we can broaden participation opportunities and deepen healthy engagement.

The group that created the Vermont Civic Health Index was spearheaded by the Vermont Secretary of State's Office. Key players in the study were the National Conference on Citizenship and the Center for Rural Studies at UVM. An advisory group included SerVermont (Vermont's State Service Commission), UP for Learning (a dynamic non-profit organization that supports Vermont educational efforts), Vermont Humanities and AmeriCorps Vermont.

While the report looked at many aspects of society, Here are some key findings around Volunteering and Donating in the Green Mountain State.

» Vermont ranks 5th in the country for informal helping and 13th for formal volunteerism.

» Volunteerism increases as age, income and educational attainment increase, except for youth (student) volunteering. Rates are highest for middle and high school students.

» Vermont ranks 2nd in the county for donations to political organizations.

Next Steps: Vermont has a strong culture of volunteerism and mutual aid that needs to be supported. We need to continue to invest in and expand initiatives that work, and better understand barriers to volunteerism so that opportunities for engagement are equitably available across different groups.

FINDINGS IN MORE DEPTH

» Donate to charitable, religious organizations & Volunteerism

Donating money and time (volunteerism) are essential forms of civic engagement that are highly dependent on an individual's means and abilities.

Volunteerism can bring people together from different beliefs and backgrounds as they work to address local challenges. The act of community volunteering contributes to the development of social capital like enhancing understanding among neighbors, increasing communication skills and building empathy.

During times of disaster, individuals coming together to help their neighbors is facilitated when the foundations of respect and understanding are established.

Resilience is improved for individuals and communities when they feel connected with neighbors and have experienced working together for common goals.

In Vermont, volunteering takes many shapes, and our language around civic engagement does not always capture the many ways that people give back. Mutual aid organizations have been very active during the pandemic and the recent floods. The individuals who are active in those networks may not even see themselves as "volunteers," but simply as community members doing what is needed in a time of crisis.

In the Volunteering and Civic Life in America Summary from 2021, Vermont ranked 5th in the country for rate of informal helping (63.9%).

On the more formal end of the spectrum, Vermont's rate of formal volunteerism is 29.1%. Vermont has a high number of non-profit organizations that rely on volunteers and the state's municipal infrastructure depends on boards and commissions that have a great deal of responsibility but often offer no pay or only a small stipend. It takes more than 5,000 elected and appointed municipal officials to make Vermont's local governments work, with most of these being volunteers.

Volunteering and donating are impacted by the level of trust people have in their communities and the feelings people have regarding whether they believe they can

make a difference. In many ways, volunteering and donating can be described as existing on a scale of community engagement. Donating money to organizations is a less direct way to participate in civic life than taking time to volunteer and be present in a community setting. And yet, donating money is often a more accessible way for many to contribute who might not otherwise be able to volunteer their time.

Availability of time to volunteer and finances to donate are two inherent challenges within this civic health indicator. Programs like AmeriCorps operating in Vermont provide embedded resources like living allowances to those in service. While it can be challenging to live on that allowance alone, by covering basic living expenses, these programs provide an example of how to increase access to service opportunities for those who couldn't afford to serve otherwise. As more volunteerism is present in a community, more community members will spend more time being civically engaged and helping others.

VERMONT'S NATIONAL STANDING

» Vermonters tend to volunteer at a higher rate than the U.S. overall.

» Vermonters donate at a rate similar to that of the nation overall (50% and 48%, respectively). In 2021 Vermonters were the second-most likely of any U.S. state to donate to political organizations (Vt.-15%, U.S.-9%).

» In 2021 Vermonters volunteered more than the U.S. population (Vt.-29%, U.S.-23%).

» In 2021 Vermont ranked 13th out of all states for the percentage of the population that reported having recently volunteered.

29% of Vermonters reported volunteering compared to 23% of the entire nation

50% of Vermonters reported donating compared to 48% of the entire nation.

» The percent of Vermonters donating \$25 or more to a charity or religious organization has declined slightly over recent time while the percent of Vermonters volunteering has seen a more significant decline, by 8 percentage points between 2019 and 2021.

» Volunteerism increases as age, income and educational attainment increase, except for youth volunteering. Volunteering is highest during school attendance, when our educational system provides robust curricular support for this; it dips significantly afterward, then slowly increases with age.



CLARA CARROLL, WITH her two children, got outside the college bubble by volunteering. It changed her life.

How chopping onions as a volunteer led one Vermonter to change lives

Clara Carroll grew up in South Starksboro and now lives just three miles down the road in Lincoln. Hidden within that short distance is a stretch of time spent out west, when she studied political science at Colorado College.

To get out of the "college bubble" and connect more deeply with her community, she and a friend started volunteering at a group living home in Colorado Springs.

She recalls one person who would hang out in the kitchen while they were making dinner. "I remember chopping onions and garlic, and this man would start talking about his life, the places he'd lived, the people he'd known, the things he was proud of and the things he was ashamed of. I remember feeling so honored to hear someone's stories. To be let in."

"I loved it," Clara says. "The work allowed me to tap into the place I was living in a very different way, and that felt very rewarding. It felt like I had something to offer there. That's when I started thinking that social work might be my career path." She was right.

After completing her bachelor's degree, Clara returned to Vermont and spent the next few years working at a homeless shelter, in several afterschool programs, and in the Burlington Housing Authority's offender reentry program, which serves people coming out of the Chittenden County Correctional Facility.

She eventually settled in at the Parent-Child Center in Middlebury, which serves families across Addison County. Clara says her work is primarily "based in the relationships I create with people. The practicalities of what they need help with—housing, healthcare, addictions, or working with family services—are secondary."

While she's always been able to make meaningful connections with people, Clara found that the experience of having children (she and her partner have a 4- and 5-year-old) gave her yet another way to tap into her role and her community differently. "Having kids makes things heavier when things are hard, or when things are not going well for a child. It hits me in a deeper way. At the same time, it's helped me understand more deeply how difficult it is, what it feels like to not sleep for days on end, and the way it can impact your life. It gives me infinite empathy for the challenges that come about," she says.

As "a part of the 'village'" of support in her community, Clara needed support from the village as well. For the last three and a half years, Clara has been pursuing a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling at Vermont State University (VTSU). She's enrolled in the weekend format for working professionals, where students take one class at a time and meet with their cohort one weekend a month.

Now in the practicum portion of the program, Clara works three days a week so she can do her internship two days a week. "It's a wild time in life to be working, interning, studying, and raising a 4- and 5-year-old. It's a lot to fit

in. But I'm not alone in that at all. Others in my cohort are in similar circumstances."

Many of her peers have also worked in the field for years and are juggling jobs, families, and school. Clara admires their collective level of expertise, commitment, and belief in doing hard things together. "They're all really talented, skilled people who we need doing this kind of work," she says.

For many of them, including Clara, VSAC funding has made their studies more affordable. When Clara enrolled at VTSU, a state grant helped pay her tuition. While that funding is no longer available, she's now receiving a Vermont Mental Health Forgivable Loan, an interest-free loan that pays up to 100% of tuition. That program, administered by VSAC and funded by the state of Vermont, forgives one year of student loan debt for every year the student works in Vermont's mental health field post-graduation.

Clara says going back to school while supporting a family has made things tight financially, and she wouldn't have started the program without the funding available through the original grant and wouldn't have been able to continue without the forgivable loan. "I feel very grateful."

Now, she's about to finish her second internship (her first was at the Parent-Child Center) at Mt. Abraham Middle/High School in Bristol, where her partner teaches middle school and where Clara went to school. Some of the same faculty members who taught Clara are still there, and she has delighted in being part of the school community in a different way. While many mental health providers choose not to practice in their home communities—to avoid the small-town realities of running into clients at the grocery store or at your child's school—Clara sees these connections as a positive.

"There are ways to manage it gracefully, especially if you bring the same approach you bring to your work: letting others take the lead on how they want to interact with you. When people you work with professionally also see you as a human and see that they have things in common with you, it can be helpful."

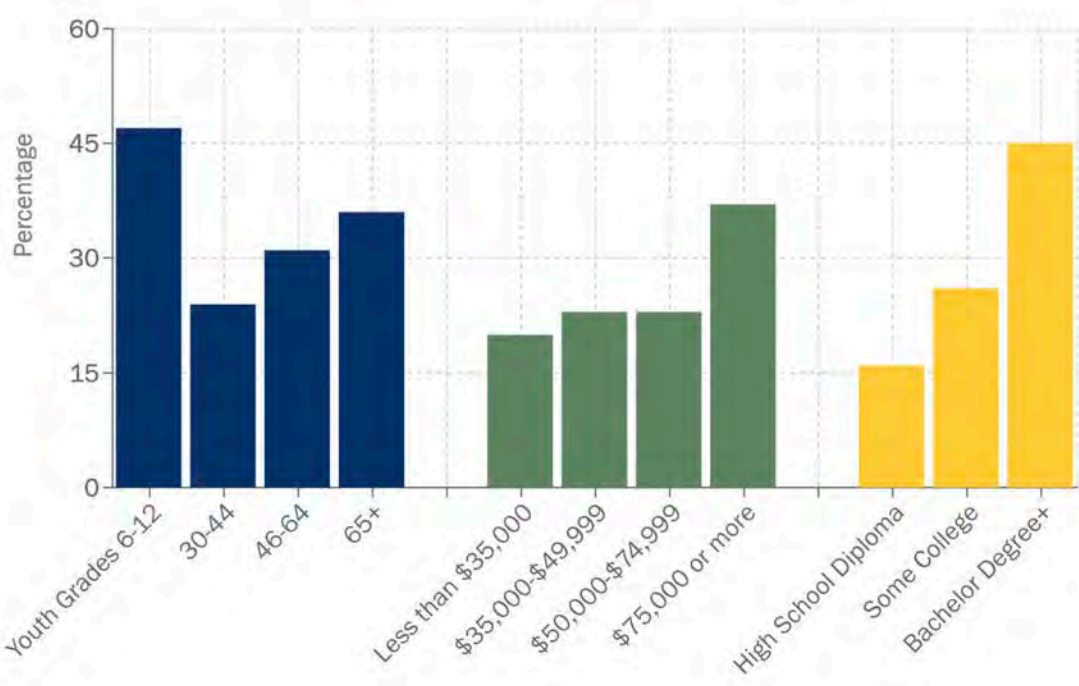
When she graduates, Clara hopes to expand into more clinical work at her current agency. But no matter where she ends up practicing, she wants it to be local. "There are a lot of people in my own community who face a lot of obstacles and aren't really heard or seen. I feel passionate about sticking with that."

A decade and a half after volunteering at the group home in Colorado Springs, Clara is still practicing her gift for letting others be seen and heard, the same way she offered a listening ear to the man in the kitchen. But Clara sees it more as a gift she receives.

"It's surprising and incredible to me every time someone welcomes me in—to their home or to their story. I feel totally honored."

Editor's note: This story was provided by the Vermont Student Assistance Corp.

Volunteerism in Vermont by Demographics



Mentors enrich kids' lives now & improve their future

BURLINGTON — The organization Mentoring Vermont partnered with Comcast for the 10th straight year to recognize the 2025 Vermont Ambassadors of Mentoring. These mentees and mentors have committed to working with Mentor Vermont to raise awareness of the benefits of youth mentoring, the necessity for greater state investment in youth mentoring, and the need for more volunteer mentors to ensure young people in Vermont have supportive mentoring relationships they need to thrive.

"Comcast believes in helping to foster the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, storytellers and creators who will build a future of unlimited possibilities," said Carolyne Hannan, senior vice president of Comcast's New England Region. "For more than a decade, we've been a proud partner with Mentor Vermont to support its efforts to enrich the lives of young people throughout the state by matching them with positive role models."

Among the eight Ambassadors of Mentoring matches for 2025 was Tracy & Edora Frazer of the Mount Abraham Unified School District Mentoring program.



Getting hands dirty for history

AROUND A DOZEN members of the Middlebury Garden Club give the Sheldon Museum gardens a spring cleaning last week in preparation for planting at the end of this month.

After the initial early-season work is done, these volunteers have monthly "garden parties" to remove weeds and perform any other needed maintenance chores. In addition, members sign up to visit the gardens each week in between for watering (if needed), deadheading to keep the blooms coming, and any other more urgent tasks.

Over the course of the growing season, an estimated 25 people help out in one or more of these ways.

To support the Middlebury Garden Club, become a member. Or go to its annual plant sale, which is scheduled for May 31.

Photo by Wally Elton

The Ambassadors of Mentoring program provides a unique opportunity for mentoring pairs to help spread awareness on the impact of mentoring while spending more time together. In

engaging with Mentor Vermont and the mentoring field through a number of different leadership opportunities and promotion activities, mentoring pairs will experience what it is like to

directly impact their communities through mission-driven work.

To learn more about the Ambassadors of Mentoring Program, please visit mentorvt.org/ambassadors-of-mentoring.