

Small and Inspiring: September Giving Together

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We invite you to join us in supporting these proposals by recommending a grant (**\$250 minimum**) to one or more of the following projects. You can recommend multiple grants for these and other Giving Together funding opportunities through your DonorCentral account or by downloading and completing this [grant recommendation form](#). We ask that you submit your Small and Inspiring grant recommendations by **Friday, September 27th**.

RECOMMEND GRANTS THROUGH DONORCENTRAL

RETURN TO FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Vergennes

Dinner Club

Summary: Dinner Club will use the social dining experience to inspire adolescents in need to reach for greater achievement and help them develop the vital social skills necessary for success as they transition to adulthood. The eight-week program for middle school youth teaches formal table manners, how to carry on polite conversation, and expectations in dining establishments. Dinner with invited community guests at a nicer area restaurant offers the group a chance to "show off" their new skills.



Town(s) Served: Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes, Waltham
Request: \$2,500

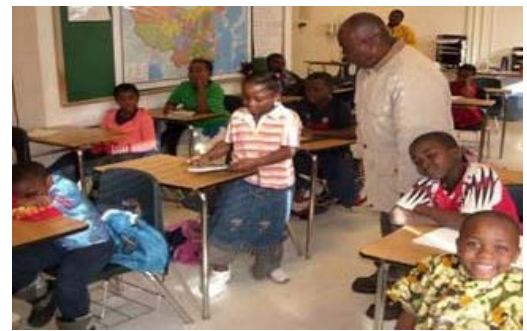
In Their Own Words: More than two thirds of Club members qualify for free school meals. Most program participants have never had the chance to eat at a restaurant aside from fast food or a diner. The elegance of the Dinner Club meal represents a culmination of skills learned and can inspire youth to strive for something in their future. After an earlier Dinner Club meal, one boy remarked, "When I grow up I want to be an architect so I can afford to come to places like this."

VCF Staff Comments: The Dinner Club offers adolescents a chance to learn the 'soft skills' associated with professional culture and develop a vision of life's possibilities by exposure to experiences that otherwise may not be accessible to them. Successful in the past, this project has been on hiatus for three years due to lack of funding; both Club and community members have been requesting its return.

Burundian American Association of Vermont

Culture, Language, and Heritage Program (CLHP)

Summary: This project will help Burundian Americans create a sense of community, celebrate their rich cultural heritage, and provide support to navigate life in America. To improve communication and understanding between students, parents, and teachers, the Association created a program at Burlington High School that offers English literacy for adults, Kirundi and math for children, mentoring, and driver education, as well as cultural celebration and food.



Town(s) Served: Burlington and Winooski
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: A girl born in a refugee camp came to Vermont and entered third grade. In school, she learned English; at home her family spoke their native Kirundi. Simple communication with her parents became difficult and frustrating. In sixth grade, the CLHP began and she reluctantly started to attend. As she learned Kirundi and became more comfortable speaking, her relationship with her parents and her school performance both improved. Now the girl is proud to speak in her native language, as well as French and English.

VCF Staff Comments: For a number of years, the Foundation received proposals focused on basic education and assimilation for refugees moving to Vermont. Recently a different pattern has emerged, showing refugee communities working to ensure that families stay connected to their home cultures and languages—especially keeping children connected to their parents.

Digital Wish

A Year of Inspired Learning

Summary: Digital Wish works directly with students and teachers to raise student engagement by developing exciting technology projects that provide learning experiences for students in underserved schools. In Sunderland, students will learn to build eBooks and portfolio projects, focusing on ecology and the environment. They will participate in afterschool technology programs that interface with the community, helping to forge closer ties between the students and the community at large.



Town(s) Served: *Sunderland*
Request: *\$2,500*

In Their Own Words: At one of the very first e-Vermont schools, Mettawee Elementary, Digital Wish provided computers and training for the 5th grade class. When the school year was ending, many of the students expressed deep concern about moving forward to the 6th grade level without computers. One student said, "I wish I could stay in 5th grade for the rest of my life!"

VCF Staff Comments: While Digital Wish is truly a national organization changing the conversation about technology in the class room, Bennington County and Sunderland are fortunate to be the testing ground for many of Digital Wish's great ideas. The organization has a great track record of work in rural, low-income communities, and this project has the potential to continue their success.

First Night Burlington

Africa to Vermont: A First Night Celebration

Summary: "Africa to Vermont: A First Night Celebration" will provide opportunities for emerging and established music and dance artists from the communities of the African diaspora, including people from Somalia, Burundi, The Congo, Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia, and more. Up to 150 free First Night admission buttons will be distributed for this New Year's Eve through the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, the Somali Bantu Association, and the Burundian American Association.



Town(s) Served: *Burlington and the surrounding region*
Request: *\$2,500*

In Their Own Words: A2VT, an African hip-hop trio from Burlington and Winooski, sets dancers whirling in the First Night dance venue at City Hall. The threesome of 20-something refugees particularly enralls younger listeners, engaging their feet and bodies, hearts and minds with lyrics about love, redemption, life in Africa, and the challenges of being a New American seeking to fit in. Nearby, the New Nile Orchestra, a high-energy Ethiopian dance

band, leads a drumming workshop for enthusiastic students. That evening the "graduates" of the drumming workshop perform on stage with the band.

VCF Staff Comments: First Night is a great opportunity for artists from the Vermont African diaspora to gain visibility and recognition as talented members of our community. A2VT was one of our first Small & Inspiring grantees. We're delighted to see them continue their rise and encourage other artists to join them.

Friends of the Cobleigh Library

Books on Wheels

Summary: Books on Wheels prepares children for school by developing early literacy skills and a life-long love of stories. The mobile literacy outreach program serves childcare centers, preschools, and afterschool programs. At each stop, a librarian reads a story for a group of children ranging from infants to middle schoolers. Books on Wheels provides consistent access to books for children who may be unable to get to the library and helps ready all children for kindergarten.



Town(s) Served: Lyndon, Lyndonville, Wheelock, Sheffield, Newark, Burke, West Burke

Request: \$2,000

In Their Own Words: On her first day with the bookmobile a librarian drove into a day care and saw excited children at the window, pointing and waiting for the bus. Shortly thereafter, the bookmobile broke down and the librarian began circulating books from her car. The children asked what was wrong with Books on Wheels—they were genuinely sad that their bookmobile was gone, but glad that Abbey still came in her car. It is clear that Books on Wheels has become very important to the children and something they can count on in their lives.

VCF Staff Comments: The Cobleigh Book Mobile program almost died with their bus, but an extraordinary donation by a generous individual who saw a news report on the dead vehicle has reinvigorated this program serving pre-school children across the region. Rural libraries don't often have the opportunity to run this type of outreach program, and they deserve our support.

Flyin' Ryan Hawks Foundation

The Decisions Program

Summary: Inspired by the life and principles of professional free-skier Ryan Hawks, the Flyin' Ryan Decisions Program guides high school sophomores to craft and share a set

of Principles for Living as a basis to make decisions about what they say, think, and do. Successfully implemented at Ryan's alma mater, South Burlington High School, the program seeks to expand to five other area high schools and create a training video to replicate the program.



Town(s) Served: South Burlington and the Champlain Valley
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: Shortly after Ryan passed away as a result of skiing accident, his family discovered a document on his computer titled "Ryan's Core Principles for Living." Here is part of the list: 1. Live every day, all day. 2. Never lose my adventuresome attitude. 3. Be the best brother, son, uncle I can. 4. Look out for others. 5. Look out for myself. 6. Look out for my surroundings. 7. Work hard. Astonished by the simplicity of his 14 principles and the reactions of those who read them, Ryan's family decided to share them with as many people as possible to inspire them to adopt their own.

VCF Staff Comments: The Flyin' Ryan Decisions program offers teens a uniquely relatable and authentic model of character development and citizenship education that is especially appealing to Vermont teenagers. The program has become a "central experience" within the South Burlington High School community and has generated great interest from other high schools, where it will likely be successful.

Middlebury Actors Workshop

Straight Up Shakespeare: The Things We Do For Love

Summary: Straight-Up Shakespeare spreads understanding, appreciation, and love for Shakespeare to students throughout Vermont. The work is a lively, funny, and moving hour-long show of scenes from the seven plays most frequently taught in high school. After the performance, the audience selects a scene and the cast takes suggestions on how interpret it. It is a stimulating experience for the students that allows them to see far deeper into the material while enjoying the opportunity to see their suggestions put into practice.



Town(s) Served: Middlebury and schools statewide
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: After our first performances, the students were bursting with ideas! They chose to work on the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet. The actors went on stage

and worked the scene, taking the students' directions. The younger kids wanted Romeo and Juliet to be drunk, and the older students wanted them to find a way to kiss each other despite the obstacle of the balcony. This direction loosened up our actors, and they found a new level of honesty and abandon that greatly enlivened the scene.

VCF Staff Comments: Straight-up Shakespeare excites us because the project is not a piece of canned curriculum but was created from scratch by a group of local actors who wanted to share their love of words and drama. The program is interactive, comedic, and deeply relevant to real teens' lives—quite different from the standard pedagogy for teaching Shakespeare.

Ottauquechee School

The Forest Kindergarten

Summary: Students in the Forest Kindergarten will spend one whole day outside, every week, all year long, rain or shine. Teachers will let the children discover forest play with all that the natural, multi-sensory environment has to offer and develop their capacity as independent, creative learners who connect with their school, community, and environment. Teachers will support child-directed learning and design routines and boundaries to keep students safe and inspired.



Town(s) Served: Hartford
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: On a winter morning, five-year-olds arrive in the school garden as snow falls. They depart on the trail solo to our meeting space in the forest. Tim stops at the creek, removes a mitten, and curls his fingers around the ice to feel the cold trickle. Sue slides down a slippery trail, before tromping off in undisturbed snow to get up the steep part. They gather wood, help build the day's fire, and join their friends on benches we built together in the fall. A day of big play, meaningful discovery, easy cooperation, and real lessons commences. Each week we watch our forest change; land, plants, and animals that, as citizens of Vermont, belong to us in a way that delivers identity and healing, and begs understanding and stewardship.

VCF Staff Comments: Teachers have demonstrated significant research in designing the Forest Kindergarten and are proceeding with an eye to demonstrating the efficacy of nature-based learning in a public school and the feasibility of scaling the program to reach more students.

Studio Place Arts

Granite Zipper Pocket Park: Unzipping the Earth in Barre

Summary: Studio Place Art's (SPA) new pocket park will feature a 72-foot granite

zipper sculpture running the length of the art center. The sculpture, created using carved grey Barre granite and stacked granite elements, is intended to inspire community pride via its celebration of local stone-carving heritage and connection to the natural world. Visitors and community members will be attracted to the pocket park because of curiosity (a gigantic zipper?!), and also by its original beauty.



Town(s) Served: Barre
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: SPA demonstrated the power of art in the community when it created a temporary Sculpture Park in the vacant lot adjacent to the art center. Community members responded with enthusiasm about changing the paradigm from a vacant lot "eyesore" to a space where people could gather, rest, sketch, play music, and enjoy art. The Granite Zipper Pocket Park is a creative green space that will be beautiful and memorable to newcomers, including those state workers who are relocating to Barre after Irene.

VCF Staff Comments: Regular investments in public artwork can foster recreation, art and cultural heritage appreciation, and economic vitality in communities like Barre. Given the upcoming relocation of many Vermont state employees to a development adjacent to the planned park, now is a perfect time to provide a public space that allows workers, residents, and visitors a place to connect with Barre and each other.

Sustainable Valley Group

Green Island Project – Community Bike Project

Summary: Youth and adults in Bellows Falls will learn bicycle maintenance and repair through free workshops. Once the bicycles are refurbished, participants can earn a bike through volunteer hours or purchase them at a low cost. The project will raise awareness of the environmental and health benefits of cycling, reduce the community's carbon footprint, and improve the health of participants. A second phase of the project will include creating bike rental outlets around the community to make bikes available to visitors and local residents.



Town(s) Served: Bellows Falls and Rockingham
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: Bellows Falls has a high unemployment rate and close to the lowest median income in Windham County. At the same time, the town scores highly as a walkable and bikeable community and has many assets: it's part of the Vermont Designated Downtown program and has a strong regional Chamber of Commerce located in the village,

social service resource centers, a satellite hospital, a strong enclosed manufacturing industry, Amtrak, Greyhound, and local bus service, recreational opportunities, and tourist attractions. Creating a strong biking culture for visitors and residents will add a distinctive resource.

VCF Staff Comments: Bellows Falls is working hard to rejuvenate the community and make it a fun and attractive place to live, work, and visit. This group has the support of Local Motion, a Vermont leader in creating bikeable and walkable communities—that support gives us confidence this project will be successful.

Whitingham Free Public Library

Youth Xpressions

Summary: Youth Xpressions is a monthly evening series where young adults can gather and express themselves in a safe, educational, and fun atmosphere. The program will create a sense of community and build connections and relationships among youth. Evenings will include one hour of structured, educational activity where participants are able to express themselves; debate topics; explore literacy; and share favorite poems, stories, and songs, followed by an hour to socialize.



Town(s) Served: *Whitingham, Jacksonville, Halifax*

Request: *\$2,500*

In Their Own Words: Our community is distraught after a recent sexual assault that is reported to have been alcohol-related. The story is tragic and many of us in the area see it as symptomatic of the larger problems our youth face. Without a place to socialize or gather in a positive way, and without after-school activities, many of our youth turn to alcohol, drugs, and other destructive behaviors. We believe that Youth Xpressions is one step in the right direction by offering our young adults a positive outlet to express themselves freely.

VCF Staff Comments: Whitingham is one of many rural communities with virtually no town center or other gathering place for young people. This project attempts to confront the challenges of rural isolation and substance abuse through proactive efforts to bring youth together in a space designed for them. This is yet another great example of the evolving role of libraries in the 21st century.

Windham Child Care Association

Growing Better Parents at Sprouts Early Learning Center

Summary: Windham Child Care Association plans to build on the enthusiasm of Sprouts Early Learning Center's staff and enrolled



families for its expanded services by hosting a series of parent workshops and family celebrations. These events would share the common goals of building relationships among the enrolled families and providing them with the opportunity to learn, share food, and have fun together.

Town(s) Served: Brattleboro, Guilford, Newfane, Chesterfield
Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: For all enrolled families, this program will provide a much needed opportunity to spend time with their children for a few hours without the daily pressures of the usual household tasks. Instead of grabbing their children to rush home and make dinner or catch a bus to a friends' house or drop the children off with a grandparent before making it to their next shift at work, they can stay at the Center and enjoy a relaxing meal with other adults and appreciate their children.

VCF Staff Comments: The Windham Childcare Association expanded its program model this past summer and, as a result, has many new families and staff members. This makes it an opportune time to implement new educational and community-building activities. We are impressed that the Association is exploring how this type of parental engagement can support sustainable business operations for childcare centers rather than simply considering it "extra" or "nice to have."

Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District

Promoting the use of locally-sourced native plants

Summary: The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District will educate Vermonters on the benefits of native, locally-sourced plants and begin the shift to local sourcing for its annual tree sale. Locally-sourced native plants are usually best suited for local wildlife, more resilient due to greater genetic diversity, and require fewer resources for their transportation and handling.



Town(s) Served: Winooski River towns in Chittenden, Washington, and Orange Counties
Request: \$1,700

In Their Own Words: Many people are long-time customers of the District's annual tree and shrub sale, and they describe "feeling like a kid in a candy shop" when they receive the brochure in the mail. The sale is a one-stop-shop for homeowners and public entities to

select plants to attract backyard wildlife and pollinators, stabilize stream banks, or create rain gardens—and this is a ready-made audience for education about locally-sourced plants. The case for local sourcing has been successfully used and promoted in the food movement and is applicable to locally-sourced plants for backyards and restoration plantings. Over time, we can promote a transition to healthier, more genetically diverse, and more resilient landscape plantings.

VCF Staff Comments: As a trusted resource for landscaping and gardening in its area, the District is in an excellent position to add a new element to the "buy local" effort by promoting the use of locally-sourced plants. This project also allows the Foundation to further connect our initiatives in agriculture and forestry.

Women Helping Battered Women (WHBW)

Peer Education and Advocacy Training

Summary: Peer Education and Advocacy training will address teen dating violence by training youth as peer advocates and providing information and emotional support to survivors of abuse. WHBW will design and deliver a new youth-focused advocate training, a need identified after four teens attended the standard training last year. The course offered will be the state's Victim and Crisis Worker Privilege certification, but will focus on youth-specific needs, including teen dating violence, youth homelessness, and teen rights in the legal system.



Town(s) Served: All towns in Chittenden County

Request: \$2,500

In Their Own Words: According to the 2011 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 7% of teens have been physically abused by an intimate partner. Last year, a South Burlington High School student was one of the first teens trained to provide emotional support. She was available by phone or email for anyone who identified as a survivor or secondary survivor of abuse. During February's Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, she initiated a Wear Orange awareness day, tabled in her school's lobby, and persuaded the varsity hockey team to don orange laces to support ending sexual violence.

VCF Staff Comments: WHBW is Vermont's largest service provider for victims of domestic abuse and well positioned to respond to what is believed to be a growing and underreported problem among Vermont adolescents. A teen-specific peer support training would be a great addition to a world too often focused only on adults.

Zack's Place Enrichment Center

Zackerfeller Chronicles, A musical comedy about Woodstock

Summary: Zack's Place and its participants

will produce, choreograph, and star in a musical that has become a popular annual community event. The story will be based on ideas from Zack's Place participants, who have a variety of physical and developmental disabilities. The cast will include community members in cameo roles and students from local schools, affording all involved an opportunity to enrich their lives.



Town(s) Served: Woodstock and the Upper Valley

Request: \$2,500



In Their Own Words: Our last musical was "Zackleton's Expedition," a reenactment of Ernest Shackleton's Expedition to the Antarctic. It was suggested we ask local furniture-maker Charles Shackleton, nephew of Ernest Shackleton, to perform. Charles hesitantly agreed, not knowing if he would have time and never having acted before. At practices he often struggled with his lines, his singing, and his dance steps. He was impressed with our Zack's Place participants who struggle with severe disabilities but were comfortable acting and performing. Charles persevered with his practices and on the day of the performance the audience laughed and cheered for him as he sang and danced. After the show he told us, "This experience has changed my life."

VCF Staff Comments: Zack's Place's collaborative creative process offers an experience that enriches the lives of its participant and the community at large. This small, grassroots organization has added a lot to the Upper Valley over the years and they are particularly good at engaging community leaders in their work.


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