



Understanding Vermont

A Shared Endeavor

The Understanding Vermont (UV) program, launched in the fall of 2007, represents an effort to learn as much as we can about the issues challenging our communities. We believe that **this learning is a shared endeavor between the Foundation and its fundholders.** In an effort to gain insight about the organizations supported by our advised fundholders, the VCF offered a \$100 UV matching grant in December. We asked fundholders to tell us what they know and love about one grantee organi-

zation's work and how that work ties to an Understanding Vermont issue — or to a new UV issue they suggested. Their chosen organization then received a \$100 matching grant from the VCF.

We were delighted to award 22 matching grants to Vermont nonprofits, and we hope you enjoy reading about some of these organizations and what our fundholders had to say. Please visit www.understandingvt.org for a complete list of matching grants.



Girls in the Dirt Divas program are ready to go!

Full Cycle, founded in 2001 by Jessica Graham and Nadine Budbill, serves girls ages 11-17 from Lamoille County and the surrounding areas. Its Dirt Divas program activities—from mountain bike skills clinics and mechanics workshops to goal-setting and journal writing time—emphasize building physical, social, and emotional skills that will serve girls in their lives outside of and beyond the program.

UV issue: Youth Engagement and Support

Recommending fund: Jennifer Murphy Memorial Fund

What the fundholder says: "Full Cycle is doing superb work by providing a growing number of young Vermont women with unique opportunities to further their intellectual and physical development."

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A TIME OF TRANSITION

As winter turns to spring, we are experiencing a transition of our own at the VCF. After Brian Byrnes' departure in late February, I became acting president & CEO. I am enjoying guiding the good work of this organization, a task made easier given the strength of our staff. Some of my duties as executive vice president for finance and operations have been transferred to other staff, but I continue to oversee all VCF investment activities.

I am very excited about our expanded outreach (see page 3). Our new community philanthropy stewards are meeting with nonprofits and with fundholders who are eager to share their thoughts and ideas. While the economic climate is becoming more challenging, the determination and ingenuity to make our communities healthy and vital continue to thrive.

Together we are *learning* about community issues and identifying opportunities where philanthropy can make a difference; *taking the lead* in nurturing innovative practices and investing in the most promising models for lasting change; and *growing* Vermont's philanthropic capital by making it easy to give and by inspiring others to give.

We look forward to continuing this exciting work with you, and we hope you are enjoying the longer days and the sense of renewal that the spring season brings.

Warmly,

Faith I. Brown
Acting President & CEO
Executive Vice President for Finance
and Operations



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A young patient at Deerfield Valley Medical Center, a Southwestern Vermont Health Care facility, gives Dr. Peter Park a hand.

Henry W. Putnam started **Southwestern Vermont Health Care** in 1912 by donating his water company to the Town of Bennington, stipulating that the proceeds be used to fund a public hospital. Its facilities and programs now serve 53,000 people in the region, and it is the only hospital in Vermont with Magnet recognition for excellence in nursing.

UV issue: Health Care

Recommending fund: Kachmar Fund

What the fundholder says: “This hospital honorably commits to its underserved population, has a vision statement that is inclusive, and is consistently a leader in new concepts for health care delivery in rural settings.”

In 2007, **Interfaith Caregivers** celebrated 20 years of serving seniors in Randolph and the surrounding area. Twenty-eight volunteers and a part-time director bring three vital programs to life: Home-safe-Home focuses on home injury prevention, Buddy System helps combat isolation, and Garden Buds focuses on health and good-for-the-soul beautification.

UV issue: Aging Population

Recommending fund: Rainbow Fund

What the fundholder says: “Interfaith Caregivers is a vital link, as it enables seniors to safely and independently stay in their own homes *and* stay connected to their communities.”



Interfaith Caregivers volunteer, Michele Packard, shows a client the Yaktrax® ice traction device, which can help prevent falls during the winter.

Grantmaking That Responds to Unanticipated Needs

While the VCF’s Special and Urgent Needs (SUN) grants program may not have the same visibility as our three primary grant rounds, it is an important part of our overall grantmaking strategy. This program allows us to be responsive and fill the unforeseen and time-sensitive needs of Vermont’s nonprofits. SUN award decisions are made within two weeks of receiving a proposal, and these small grants can help organizations through a significant leadership transition, develop a new piece of infrastructure, or provide a bridge between unanticipated short-term gaps in funding. In 2007 we received 32 SUN grant proposals requesting \$147,179 and awarded **19 grants** in 10 counties, **totaling \$79,391**. Special thanks to Lois McClure for her generous support of the SUN program.

Brandon Town Hall	\$5,000
Cambridge Afterschool Program	\$2,500
Champlain Valley OEO	\$5,000
Elmhill, Inc.	\$3,000
The Gailer School	\$5,000
Intervale Center, Inc.	\$5,000
Isle La Motte Reef Preservation Trust, Inc.	\$3,395
Magic Mountain Children’s Center	\$5,000
Morgan Historical Society	\$5,000
Morningside House	\$1,700
Out & About Adult Day Care Center	\$5,000
People’s Health & Wellness Clinic	\$3,201
Public Assets Institute	\$1,800
Rutland County Women’s Network & Shelter	\$3,800
Starksboro Meeting House Cooperative Preschool ..	\$4,995
Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights	\$5,000
Vermont Public Interest Research & Education Fund	\$5,000
Windsor County Court Diversion Program	\$5,000
Woodstock Area Council on Aging	\$5,000



Community Philanthropy Stewards

Strengthening our connections with you

What is a community philanthropy steward you ask? Last year the VCF made the commitment to increase our engagement in Vermont communities, and we integrated our grantmaking and donor services functions to support this commitment. The result is a team of six community philanthropy stewards who work with both fundholders and nonprofits to increase the impact of philanthropy in Vermont. The team is organized around our primary grantmaking areas of Basic Human Needs, Successful Communities, and Sustainable Communities, with two stewards focused on each area.

We thought you'd like to know a little bit more about the stewards. Feel free to contact them — they would really like to hear from you.

Mary Conlon (*Basic Human Needs*) has been at the VCF for 13 years, the last four as program director, managing the Foundation's competitive grant rounds. In addition to program work, she has a background in nonprofit finance and administration, and received a Masters of Science in Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Management from St. Michael's College. Mary lives with her husband and three children in Cornwall.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup (*Successful Communities*) has worked as a community organizer for 17 years in organizations as diverse as the Burlington/Puerto Cabezas Sister City Program, Rural Vermont, and Outright Vermont. He served as the founding executive director of R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center in Burlington and most recently worked as the program manager for the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts. Christopher lives with his partner in Hinesburg.

Laura Marlow (*Basic Human Needs*) grew up in Vermont and attended Middlebury College. After teaching in the Dominican Republic, where she helped open a school, she worked for two private foundations in Colorado. Her responsibilities included grantmaking, programming, and managing the University of Colorado's Parent Fund. Laura is thrilled to be back in Vermont and lives with her fiancé in South Burlington.

Pat Menduni (*Sustainable Communities*) has been working with Vermont's nonprofit, social service, and community arts organizations for more than 25 years and served as a member of Senator James Jeffords' staff for ten years. She is a graduate of Trinity College and Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. Pat lives in her hometown of Rutland among family and friends.

Jen Peterson (*Successful Communities*) comes from Planned Parenthood of Northern New England where she worked for 13 years supporting its mission in a variety of ways. Her first position was international program administrative coordinator, and most recently she served as the annual fund director. Jen lives in Huntington with her husband and two children.

Ryan Torres (*Sustainable Communities*) has worked with nonprofit organizations for the last 13 years, most recently as the executive director of the Lead Action Collaborative in Boston. He is a graduate of Oberlin College, has a strong interest in environmental and sustainability issues, and is a thesis away from a Masters in Urban and Environmental Policy from Tufts. Ryan and his family recently moved to his wife's hometown of Middlebury.



From left to right: Front row – Laura Marlow, Jen Peterson, Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup. Back row – Ryan Torres, Pat Menduni, Mary Conlon.



News & Notes

CEO Search Update: The VCF is conducting a national CEO search and is looking for a leader who has the ability to guide an organization with strong momentum, clear vision, and an appetite for learning and innovation. A search committee comprised of VCF staff and board members meets regularly and recently hired a search firm to assist with the process.

Please contact us at searchcommittee@vermontcf.org to share your ideas and suggestions.

Agency Fundholders: You can now sign up for DonorCentral! View fund balances, gifts, and distributions — all online at your own convenience. Contact Fund Administrator Lydia Brownell to learn more or register online today at www.vermontcf.org/donorcentral.

2007 Basic Human Needs Grant Awards: Fifty-one organizations received grants totaling \$420,900. Our Giving Together partners contributed \$266,695, with 28 funds participating — the largest number in a single grant round since the program began. Please visit our website for a complete grants report or for information about the Giving Together program.

Nonprofit Capacity-Building Update

The VCF has been working with Vermont nonprofits to identify a sustainable revenue model that provides the sector with capacity-building opportunities and resources. Results from a survey sent to nonprofits late last year suggest that more work is needed to create this model. Based on the feedback, we have adapted our plans for this year and will:

- Budget at least \$100,000 to pursue programs and partnerships that specifically support capacity-building
- Invite nonprofits to submit events to our Understanding Vermont community calendar
- Expand our online offerings to include a directory of consultants and businesses that serve nonprofits
- Complete a study on Vermont-focused philanthropy
- Update the sector on information regarding legislative issues

For survey highlights and detailed information, please visit www.vermontcf.org/nonprofit-sector



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This publication was printed at Ecolor Printing in Waitsfield, Vermont, one of a few printing operations in the state that utilizes an all-digital press, greatly reducing the impact of the printing process on our environment.



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