

Vermont Community Foundation

Community Report

Rutland County

Rutland County covers 939 square miles in west-central Vermont, with 26 small towns and one urban center—Rutland City. Surrounded by mountains and rich in natural beauty, the county offers a high quality of life marked by safety, strong schools, and a welcoming community. Built by merchants, craftspeople, and farmers, the region's legacy of Merino sheep, marble, and railroad commerce reflects a vision of rural vitality that carries into today's revitalization.

Outdoor recreation is a major draw and economic driver with hiking, biking, and skiing at Killington and Pico strengthening tourism. A vibrant local food movement, anchored by Vermont's largest year-round farmers' market, adds to the region's appeal. Innovation and co-working spaces are helping diversify the business sector, while arts and culture are central to community life through institutions like the Paramount Theatre and Chaffee Art Center.

Rutland County's assets are shaping a future where small-town charm meets forward-looking development, and resilience grows from recreation, food, arts, and community connection.

In 2024, the Vermont Community Foundation supported the region with nearly $1.3 million in grant funding. The majority—$894K —came from donor advised fundholders, whose giving underscores the county's role as a regional hub of activity. Their support spanned skiing and sports, youth mentorship and safety, healthcare, education, and food security.

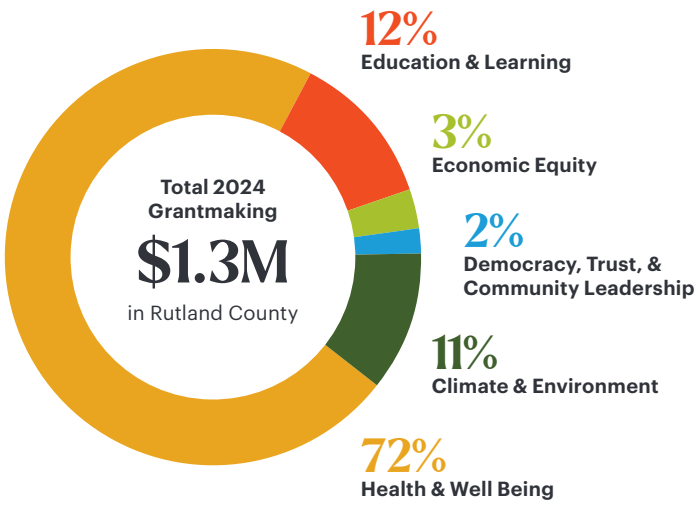

Photo Credit: Arwen Turner, Come Alive Outside

$1.3M Total 2024 Grantmaking | 118 Total 2024 Grants | $600K in Active Mission Investments (as of Aug. 2025)

Several key organizations contribute to Rutland County's vitality, enhancing life for residents and creating opportunities that draw visitors and new community members.

Come Alive Outside
has received support from donor advised fundholders and our Better Places partnership with the State of Vermont to revitalize Depot Park into a welcoming community green space.

The Hub CoWorks
in downtown Rutland, developed with VCF support, accelerates the digital economy—creating high-paying jobs, attracting new residents, and increasing the region's ability to secure federal funding for further growth.

Vermont Farmers Food Center
has received nearly $100K since 2023 from VCF, supporting the Farmacy program, Rutland County Eats, and expansion of its regional food hub.



Hills & Hollows Fund

Deeply committed to the Poultney area where they live, Tom and Ina Smith Johnson have long championed educational opportunities, children and families, and efforts that foster cohesiveness and sustainability. "The Community Foundation has been very important to our philanthropy," said Tom. "We share a common set of values and a belief in strengthening small, rural communities, both in our national outreach as well as our Vermont-based programs."

Through their Hills & Hollows Fund at the VCF, the Johnsons support local efforts to bring people together toward a common purpose in the greater Rutland area. "That might be something straightforward like a bus to bring kids to a museum or a kitchen for the senior center," explained Ina. "Or it might be encouraging a statewide program to take notice of our communities in the Rutland area."

Since establishing Hills & Hollows in 2003, over $1.73 million in grants have been awarded to area organizations, reflecting the Johnsons enduring commitment to community security, joy, and growth. In addition to the organizations spotlighted below, the fund has provided recurring support to other favorite Poultney-area organizations, such as Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District, Stone Valley Arts, and many others.

REclaimED is a dynamic community hub in Rutland County that blends hands-on learning, creativity, and sustainability. Building on the legacy of Green Mountain College's REED program, it promotes environmental responsibility by diverting waste and teaching sustainable trades and crafts.

More than a makerspace, REclaimED is a catalyst for sustainable innovation and local resilience. It empowers artisans, youth, and entrepreneurs with space, tools, and support to participate in workshops, creative projects, and repair events.

Since 2019, the Hills & Hollows Fund contributed over $40,000 to its growth. REclaimED has since acquired the tools, equipment, and space necessary to run the community makerspace.

The **Poultney Historical Society** has been supported by Hills & Hollows for two decades, beginning with a 2004 small grant for equipment to record a community oral history project. Since then, nearly $90,000 has supported a wide range of efforts from preserving textiles, expanding living history programs, and restoring a local cemetery.

Founded in 1935, the all-volunteer historical society preserves and shares the rich history of Poultney. It maintains three historic buildings—Union Academy, the Melodeon Factory, and the East Poultney Schoolhouse—that house artifacts, documents, and genealogical records. The historical society brings local history to life through exhibits, research, and narrated audio tours that are accessible to the community and beyond.

SUE DURANT & MITCH KIMBLE:

Rooted in Community

Since 2015, the Vermont Farmers Food Center's Farmacy Project has provided over 4,100 Rutland-area individuals with free, locally grown produce sourced from small and emerging farms—directing more than $385,000 into the local agricultural economy. Nearly 75% of participants report relying on the program for fruits and vegetables they could not otherwise afford. Poor nutrition is closely tied to chronic health conditions, and the food "farmacy" approach both strengthens the local agricultural economy and improves health outcomes, helping to reduce diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

"We are passionate about the benefits of eating healthy food and supporting the local farm economy. **We support the VFFC's Farmacy program to provide local families with limited incomes with access to fresh, locally grown produce** and farm products."

- VCF Fundholders Sue Durant and Mitch Kimble



Photo Credit: Vermont Farmers Food Center



Photo Credit: Camp Thorpe

RALPH & NORMA HATHAWAY:

Planned with Purpose

Ralph and Norma Hathaway were engaged business and community leaders in Rutland, Brandon, and Goshen. Ralph's lifelong passion was Camp Thorpe, where as a teenager he helped build the stone cabins and later served decades as a volunteer and board of trustees member.

The Hathaways set up multiple Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs) through the VCF as part of their retirement and estate planning. CGAs provide a predictable income during a beneficiary's lifetime and direct the remainder to one or more nonprofits. Today, Ralph and Norma's CGAs make annual distributions to Rutland Regional Medical Center's Foley Cancer Center, the VNA Hospice of the Southwest Region, and Camp Thorpe.

"Ralph could easily be considered one of Camp Thorpe's most influential patriarchs. **Ralph's and Norma's generosity and proactive planning have positioned Camp in a way that will allow us to continue to serve our campers** in a very successful and safe way. I have always been humbled and inspired by their selflessness."

- Former Camp Thorpe Director Lyle Jepson

Mission Investing in Rutland's Future

Through mission investments, the Vermont Community Foundation is helping to unlock opportunities across Rutland County by aligning capital with community priorities. These investments go hand-in-hand with grantmaking and partnerships, supporting projects that create long-term value for residents while advancing VCF's core impact areas.

At **Pittsford Village Farm**, a $600,000 loan commitment is helping transform a historic property in the heart of town into a hub for connection and opportunity. Plans include a community gathering space, a childcare center serving 26 infants and toddlers, a café, and two affordable apartments. With childcare capacity and affordable housing among Vermont's most pressing needs, this project exemplifies how mission investing can leverage local vision into lasting impact. Other support for the farm has come through the VCF's donor advised and discretionary funds, including grants from the Regional and Local Impact and Better Places programs.

In downtown Rutland, VCF's $600,000 investment in the **Paramount Theatre** is supporting the renovation of the adjoining Richardson Block. By expanding performance, event, and community space, the Paramount will not only strengthen Rutland's cultural vitality but also drive economic activity and provide new opportunities for learning and wellbeing.

VCF is also fueling entrepreneurship through its $400,000 anchor commitment to **RDF Ventures**, a venture capital fund that emerged from StartUp Rutland at The Hub CoWorks. The early commitment helped leverage federal funding through the Vermont Economic Development Authority, positioning the fund to provide pre-seed and seed capital for small businesses, nonprofits, and agricultural enterprises statewide. By expanding access to capital, RDF Ventures is building ecosystems of opportunity and entrepreneurship while creating high-quality jobs—critical ingredients for a thriving local economy.

Together with investments in statewide intermediaries that support housing, small businesses, and farms in the Rutland region, these commitments demonstrate how mission investing channels resources toward community needs, strengthens local resilience, and advances VCF's vision of a more just, thriving Vermont.

Photo Credit: Pittsford Village Farm



To learn more or speak with a philanthropic advisor, please visit **vermontcf.org** or contact us at **philanthropy@vermontcf.org** or **802 388-3355 opt. 5.**