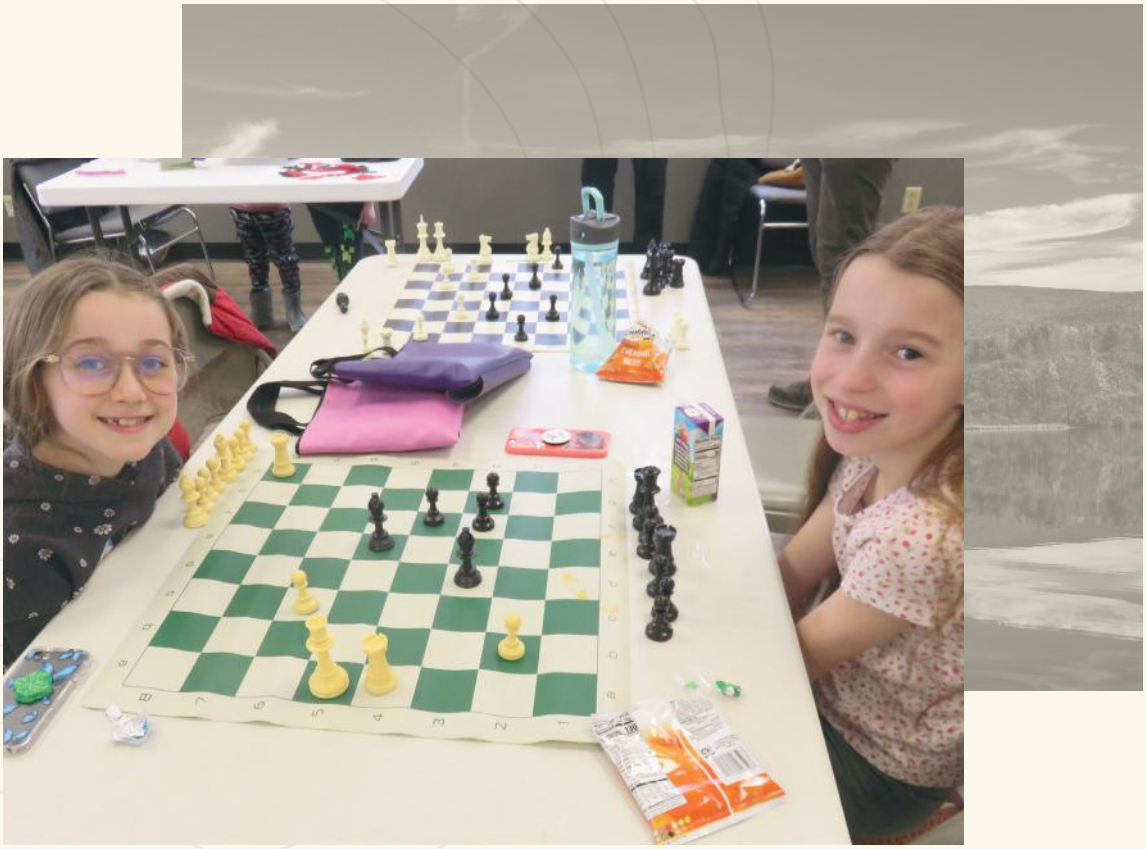
Vermont Community Foundation



Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth

Helping Bennington-Area Youth Succeed in School, Life, College, and Career

BENNINGTON | NORTH BENNINGTON | POWNAL | SHAFTSBURY | WOODFORD

Youth Are Important to Our Community

Bennington-area youth are important. They matter. Not only as individuals full of promise and potential, but also as contributing members of our society. When young people are engaged, they bring vitality, service, creativity, and knowledge to our community. They work part-time jobs, volunteer, play sports, and help their neighbors. We are helping young people in the Bennington-area springboard to a vibrant future.

OUR GOAL

$1M

With your help, we can double our impact now and in the future.
Our goal is to extend grantmaking over the next five years from $191K to $400K to meet immediate needs, and increase the fund endowment from $522K to $1 million in order to continue support for future generations of Bennington-area youth.

+ $191K for grantmaking



+ $522K to fund endowment





Bennington Free Library

CHESS PROGRAM
The Check It Out Chess Program offers youth in grades 6-12 the opportunity to develop decision-making, persistence, and problem-solving skills through healthy competition. "Chess is a powerful learning experience that is one of the great equalizers. Anyone can play."

- Lynne Fonteneau McCann



Vermont Arts Exchange

MUSIC EXCHANGE
Through workshops and performances, students from Bennington's low-income housing communities were invited to learn music technology, songwriting and singing from professional artists. "The program empowers young people to build successful futures for themselves through music and employment in the creative sector."

- Matthew Perry



SVSU

JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL
Students in the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union organized a free, public Juneteenth celebration and commemoration. "Student-led groups opened the door to community members to learn about the holiday, engage in its cultural significance, foster a sense of cooperation, and facilitate equity and inclusion."

- Jonathan Phipps

“Growing up in a community where neighbors know and help each other is a profound experience. Alison had that growing up in North Bennington. To thrive and be successful, young people today also need and deserve even more opportunities to explore, learn, and be inspired. This fund creates those opportunities.”

- Alison Nowak and Bob Cane, supporters of the fund



Bennington Martens

YOUTH BASKETBALL

By holding youth activities and community service projects that show “good things happen when we all work together,” the Bennington Martens coach more than basketball skills. “It’s about leadership and communication, and that transfers into everyday life. We want youth to know who they are and realize they can accomplish anything when they put in the work.”

- Shawn Pratt



Center for Restorative Justice

GARDENING

Students involved in the juvenile justice system planted a garden and donated the harvest to a local food kitchen. “None of the youth had ever grown plants from seed. They got their hands dirty, took pride in the plants, learned the health value of fresh produce, and gave back to their community.”

- Leitha Ann Cipriano

Grantees

Alliance for Community Transformations (ACT)

Bennington College

Bennington Free Library

Bennington Martens

Bennington STEMworks Corp

Berkshire Family YMCA

Catamount Access Television Corporation (CAT-TV)

Center for Restorative Justice

Community College of Vermont (CCV) Bennington

Friends of Hiland Hall Gardens

Gallop to Success

Governor’s Institutes of Vermont

John G. McCullough Free Library

Mount Anthony Union High School (Black Student Alliance - BSA)

Mount Anthony Union High School (Sexuality and Gender Awareness Alliance - SAAGA)

NJTL of Bennington VT

Outright Vermont

Paran Recreations

Queer Connect

Rutland Area NAACP

Southern Vermont Arts Center

Southwest VT Regional Technical School District

Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union

Sunrise Family Resource Center

The DREAM Program, Inc.

Town of Bennington

Threshold Collaborative

United Counseling Service of Bennington County

Vermont Arts Exchange

Young Hacks Academy



You are making a difference!

$191K

in Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth grants to date

$522K

in fund endowment

$2.74M

at work in Bennington County as of 12/31/2025

The Vermont Community Foundation and its family of funds made 154 grants totaling $2.13M and held $613K in mission investments in Bennington County in 2025

What is the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth?

YOUR LOCAL FUND FOR LOCAL GRANTMAKING. Established in 2018, the Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth is a permanent source of funding for initiatives that support, educate, and empower Bennington-area middle and high school youth. Through programs that create opportunities for youth to connect and feel a sense of belonging, the fund encourages youth to engage in school, work, community, and life.

"Bennington is a small community and there haven't been as many opportunities for youth to get together, have fun, and be exposed to new activities as elsewhere. Five years ago, the Vermont Community Foundation brought together dozens of Bennington-area leaders and people working with youth to create a fund that would provide middle and high schoolers with more choices–from robotics to athletics, job training, community service, and leadership opportunities–and it's working. Young people are finding their own path. Let's expand it together."

- Dimitri Garder, co-founder & CEO of Global-Z and VCF board member

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