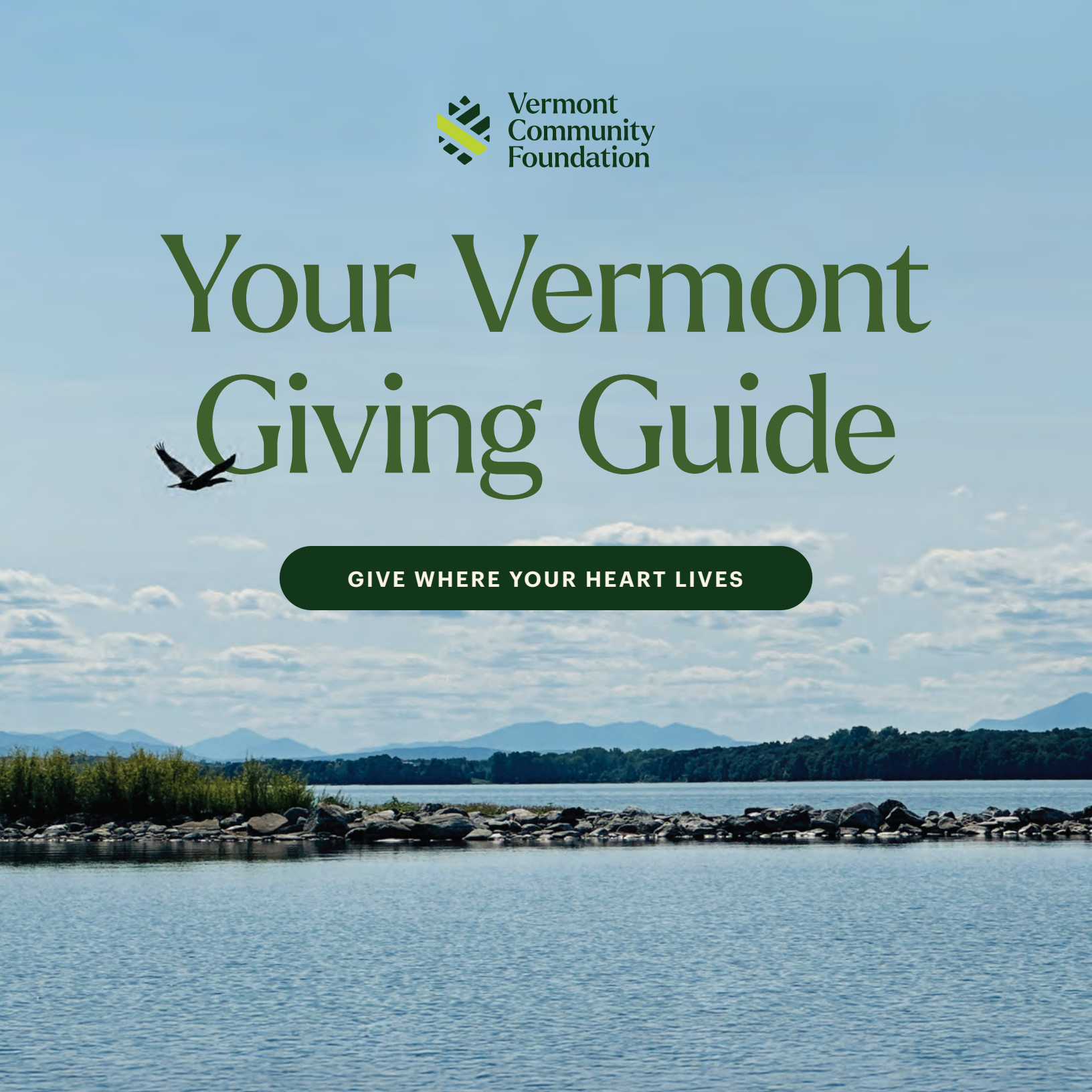
Vermont Community Foundation

Your Vermont Giving Guide

GIVE WHERE YOUR HEART LIVES



There’s no one way to give.

Start where you are. Follow what matters.
Let this guide help you give with heart
and with impact.

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Welcome to the Giving Guide

In Vermont, giving is more than generosity. It's how we care for one another.

It's the neighbor who brings a hot meal in hard times. The community that shows up after a flood. The shared belief that we all do better when we look out for each other.

This guide is your invitation to reflect on what giving means to you. It's a chance to explore your values, your memories, and your hopes for the future. Whether you're supporting your hometown, a student you'll never meet, or an idea just beginning to bloom, you're part of something bigger. There's no single path to giving. What matters is that it feels true to you and is rooted in what you love.

We're honored to walk this path with you.

Giving with Vermont Expertise

At the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), we believe philanthropy is a powerful way to improve lives and help Vermont thrive—today and for generations to come. We are a community of more than 1,000 individuals, families, and businesses who care deeply about this place we call home. Our work connects donors with opportunities to support Vermont communities through strategic giving, guided by local insight and a deep understanding of our state's needs. We also partner with donors on their philanthropy beyond Vermont. When you give through the VCF, you're supported by trusted partners who share your commitment to making a difference.



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Our donor advised fundholders have the freedom to give where their hearts lead them, whether it's supporting a local nonprofit, bolstering a statewide initiative, or addressing needs beyond our state's borders.

In 2024, thanks to the generosity of our fundholders and donors, 3,342 grants were awarded to Vermont-based nonprofits, with another 954 grants going to national and international causes. No matter your passion, we're here to help you create a legacy of giving that reflects your values and drives meaningful change in the communities and causes you care about most.



Closing the Opportunity Gap, Together

When Vermonters come together, amazing things happen. Every dollar we grant tells a story of neighbors looking out for one another, of communities finding strength, and of hope for a brighter future. Last year, through the generosity of our fundholders, the Vermont Community Foundation put more than $52 million in grants to work across the state. These grants met urgent needs while helping build opportunities for tomorrow.

"Giving is how we stay connected to each other and to Vermont. It's how we say, 'I see you, and I care about your experience.' In uncertain times, the act of giving becomes an act of hope. It reminds us that we're still here, still showing up, still building a future together. That's what makes Vermont special. And that's what makes this work worth doing."

— Dan Smith, President & CEO, Vermont Community Foundation

2024

Where Giving Made a Difference

$6.7M

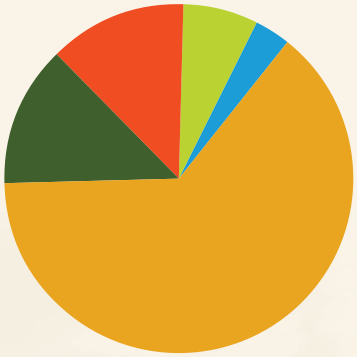
Education & Training

Education opens doors. We support programs that help students thrive, build meaningful careers, and find lifelong opportunities to learn and grow.

$6.8M

Climate & Environment

Vermont's natural beauty is part of who we are. We invest in stewardship, climate resilience, and sustainable agriculture so future generations can enjoy the clean, vibrant landscape we know and love.



$33.3M

Health & Wellbeing

We believe healthy communities are the foundation of a thriving Vermont. Our grants expand access to care, healthy food, housing, and connection—helping neighbors of all ages live well.

$3.6M

Economic Opportunity

Every Vermonter deserves the chance to succeed. We focus on affordable housing, local business development, and a strong safety net to help families build stability.

$1.7M

Democracy, Trust & Community Leadership

Strong communities are built on trust and participation. We invest in local leadership opportunities, civic engagement, a robust local news network, and the connections that keep Vermont communities thriving.

Giving Exercises: Giving That Feels Like You

We all give for different reasons. Some give to support their neighbors. Others give to protect a place they love.

Some are moved by a moment, an opportunity to step up and make a difference right now. Others are thinking long-term, considering legacy and the kind of future they want to help shape.

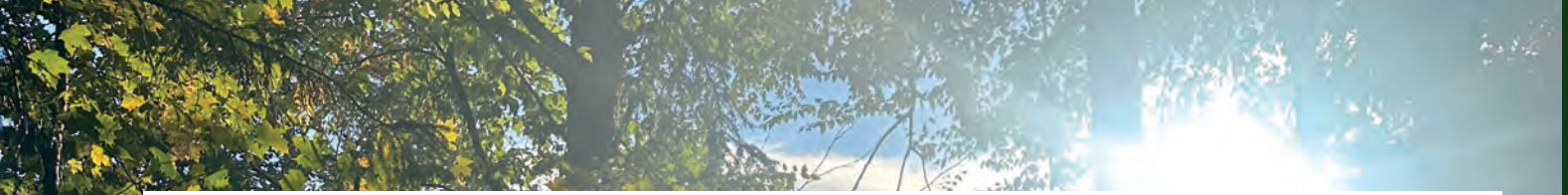
Some are navigating new financial chapters, perhaps after selling a business, receiving an inheritance, or exploring thoughtful and tax-smart ways to give using appreciated assets.

Whether it's about connection, impact, purpose, or practicality, giving starts with what matters to you.

Whatever the reason, giving is an act of hope.

The following pages are here to help you reflect on what drives your giving and what kind of impact feels meaningful to you. There's no such thing as one "right answer." The most important part is starting from the heart.

This year's exercises invite you to explore what matters to you through memory, place, music, and imagination. Use them to reflect alone, spark conversations with family, or even connect with one of our advisors.



EXERCISE 1

Your Giving Compass

Take a moment to reflect on the causes that matter most to you.

Consider:

- What issues keep you up at night?
- What news stories move you to want to take action?
- What experiences in your life have shaped your view of what's important?

Now, list 3-5 broad areas of interest (e.g., Education, Environment, Arts) and then narrow each down to specific issues or populations you'd like to impact.

EXAMPLE: *Broad Area: Education, Specific Issues: Early Childhood Literacy, STEM Education for Girls, Adult Job Retraining*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

"Philanthropy isn't just about giving. It's about growing something together. When people choose to invest their generosity with us, that gift keeps working. It grows over time, in trust, relationships, and impact. That's what lets us show up for Vermont when it matters most, now and for generations to come."

— Felipe Rivera, Vice President Strategy, Vermont Community Foundation

EXERCISE 2

Love Letter to Vermont: Exploring Your Giving Motivation

At its core, giving is an act of love.
Love for a place. Love for people.
Love for the world you hope to leave behind.

This reflection is your chance to write a love letter to Vermont—or whatever place or purpose lives in your heart. Let this be a moment to slow down and name what's behind your giving. The memories. The values. The dreams.

TRY THIS:
Take a quiet moment and write a short letter that begins with: "Dear Vermont, I give because..."

Write freely. Let your words come from the heart. You might reflect on:

- A moment when giving felt deeply meaningful
- A tradition or belief that shapes how you show up
- Whether you give quietly or publicly—and why
- How your children, family, or community factor in
- The change you want your giving to help make possible
- How you hope Vermont will look or feel, because of your care

EXAMPLE: *Dear Vermont, I give because I want every child in this state to feel like they belong, no matter where they come from or who they are. I give because my grandfather always said, "You take care of your neighbors." I give because I believe in beauty, in resilience, and in second chances.*





Dear Vermont, I give because...

EXERCISE 3

Mapping What Matters: A Place-Based Giving Reflection

Vermont isn't just where you live. It's where your stories unfold. Where your people are. Where your roots (or chosen roots) live.

Grab a pen or simply close your eyes and imagine a map of Vermont in front of you.

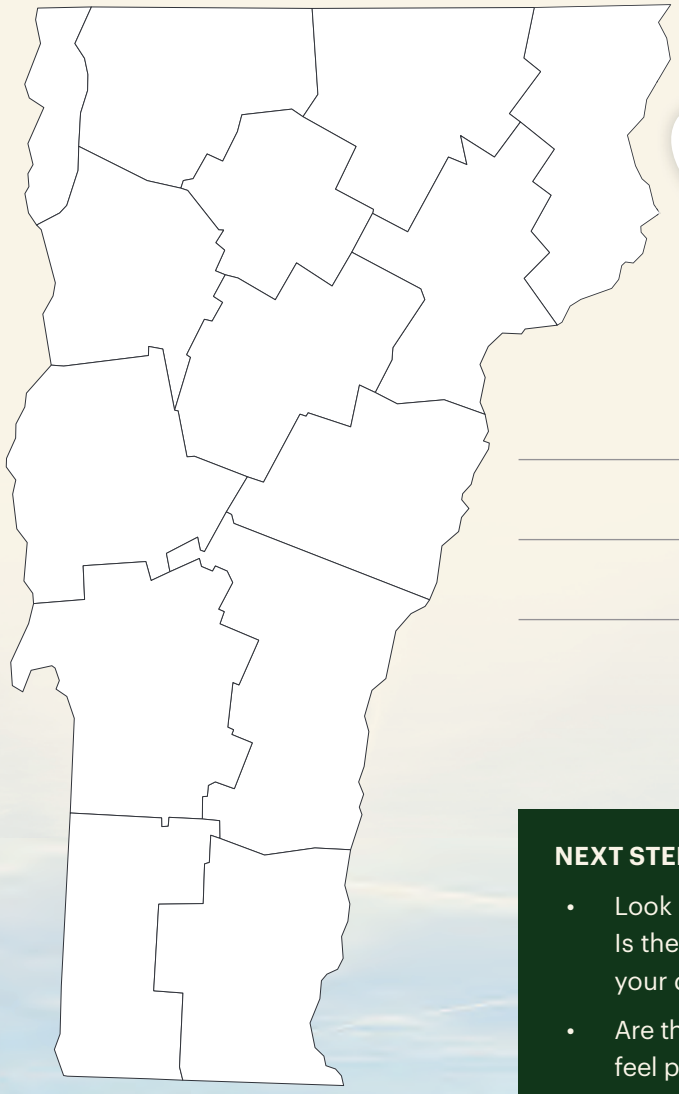
Think about:

- Where do you feel most connected?
- Where have you made memories that shaped you?
- Where do you see beauty?
- Where have you witnessed need or resilience in a way that moved you?
- Where do you want to make a difference?

NOW TRY THIS:
Sketch a rough outline of Vermont or use the one on the opposite page. Place a heart, star, or dot in the places that matter most to you. Write a word or short phrase next to each to describe why it's meaningful.

EXAMPLE:

Brattleboro – "Where I first got involved in the arts."
Barre – "Saw how flood recovery brings neighbors together."
Island Pond – "Where we vacationed growing up. Still feels like home."



NEXT STEP:

- Look at the map. Is there a pattern in your dots?
- Are there places you feel pulled to invest your time, attention, or giving?
- Circle one that feels like a good place to begin.

EXERCISE 4

Your Giving Soundtrack

If your philanthropy had a playlist... what would be on it?

Music holds memory. It stirs emotion. It captures a moment in time or a vision for the future. Sometimes a single song says what a whole mission statement can't.

This exercise invites you to connect with your giving through feeling, memory, and rhythm.

TRY THIS:
Pick three songs that represent how you feel about giving, what you want to change, or what inspires you to act. These could be childhood favorites, protest anthems, lullabies, or something you heard yesterday that just clicked.

For each one, jot down:

- Song Title + Artist
- What it evokes
- What cause or value it connects to for you

EXAMPLES:

Song: *"Stand by Me" – Ben E. King*

Evokes: *Solidarity. Showing up.*

Connects to: *Community support, neighbors helping neighbors*

Song: *"Here Comes the Sun" – The Beatles*

Evokes: *Hope, healing*

Connects to: *Mental health, recovery, resilience*

Song: *"Fast Car" – Tracy Chapman*

Evokes: *Longing for opportunity, starting fresh*

Connects to: *Economic mobility, education, housing*

Song: *"The View Between Villages" – Noah Kahan*

Evokes: *Coming home, finding peace in familiar places*

Connects to: *Belonging, rural renewal, creating safe and welcoming communities for all*

YOUR SOUNDTRACK:

1. Song: _____

   Evokes: _____

   Connects to: _____

2. Song: _____

   Evokes: _____

   Connects to: _____

3. Song: _____

   Evokes: _____

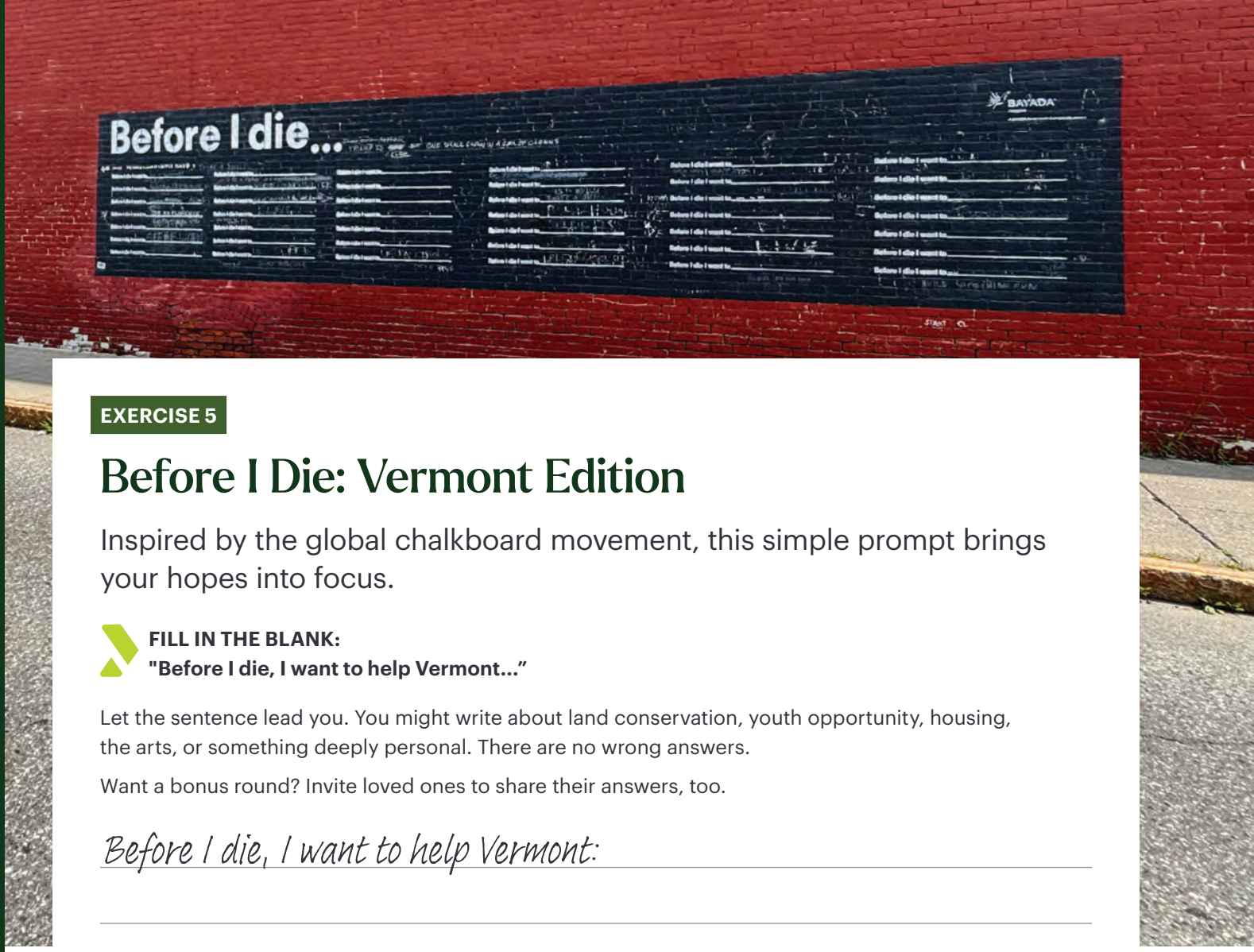
   Connects to: _____

Now take a look at your playlist.

- Is there a shared theme or feeling?
- What values are coming through?
- Is there a cause or community that this music nudges you toward?

Let your soundtrack be a guidepost. You can share it with your family or even play it at your next giving conversation.





EXERCISE 5

Before I Die: Vermont Edition

Inspired by the global chalkboard movement, this simple prompt brings your hopes into focus.

FILL IN THE BLANK:
"Before I die, I want to help Vermont..."

Let the sentence lead you. You might write about land conservation, youth opportunity, housing, the arts, or something deeply personal. There are no wrong answers.

Want a bonus round? Invite loved ones to share their answers, too.

Before I die, I want to help Vermont:

EXERCISE 6

Future Headlines

It's the year 2035. A local newspaper is writing a story about a transformation you helped spark in Vermont.

What's the headline?

Write it boldly across the page.

Then add a subhead: What did you do to help make it happen?

This exercise pairs well with a cup of tea, a big dream, and maybe a friend to brainstorm with.

VERMONT NEWS 2035



Smart Giving Options for Your Financial and Philanthropic Goals



"It's really important to come together—to be in community—as we imagine and create the future we want to see in Vermont. The power of connection, shared experience, and mutual inspiration is what keeps people engaged in their community and hopeful about the future. Whether it's through a conversation, a gathering, or a gift, every act of showing up for one another helps strengthen relationships and the fabric of this place we all love."

— Stacie Fagan, Vice President of Philanthropy, Vermont Community Foundation

Types of Funds You Can Establish

The Vermont Community Foundation offers various types of funds to match your philanthropic interests and needs:

MOST POPULAR: Donor Advised Funds (DAF)

This is an invested giving account that provides maximum flexibility for donors who want to stay involved in their giving. You recommend grants to charities of your choice, and we handle the logistics.

Community Impact Fund

These are for donors who want to support a broad range of needs across Vermont. Your contribution gives VCF the flexibility to respond to the most pressing challenges in our communities now and in the future.

Designated Funds

If you have specific organizations you want to support over time, a designated fund allows you to direct your gifts to one or more nonprofits in perpetuity.

Field-of-Interest Funds

These allow you to focus your giving on a particular issue, such as education, environmental conservation, or healthcare. VCF then directs grants to vetted organizations within your chosen field.

Mission Investing Fund

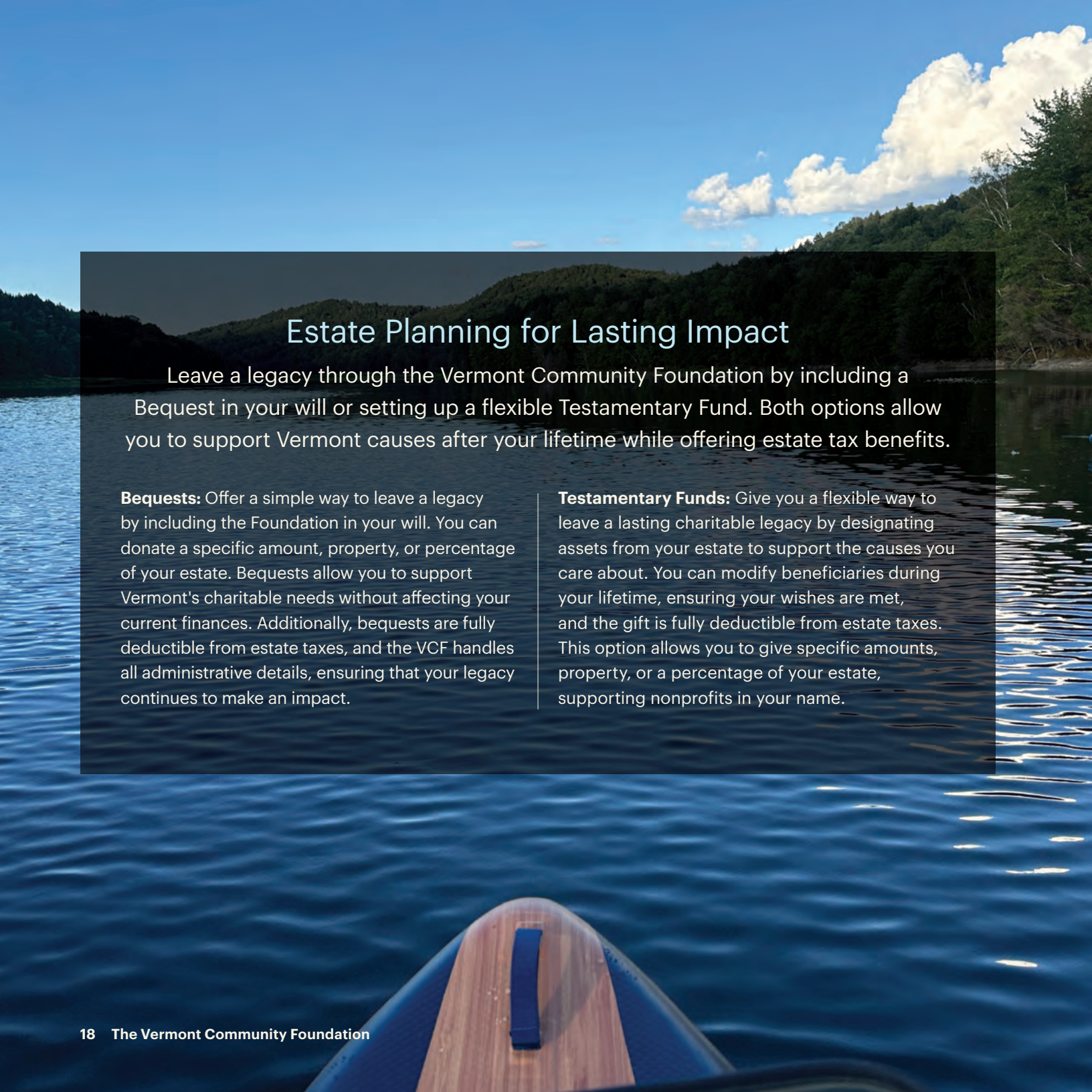
This fund is fully committed to place-based mission investments—driving economic development and job creation, investments support businesses, organizations, and community initiatives across Vermont that can generate both financial returns and meaningful social or environmental impact.

Corporate Giving Funds

These funds streamline and maximize the impact of your business's charitable giving.

Supporting Organizations

These are for donors who want the identity of their own foundation without the administrative burden.



Estate Planning for Lasting Impact

Leave a legacy through the Vermont Community Foundation by including a Bequest in your will or setting up a flexible Testamentary Fund. Both options allow you to support Vermont causes after your lifetime while offering estate tax benefits.

Bequests: Offer a simple way to leave a legacy by including the Foundation in your will. You can donate a specific amount, property, or percentage of your estate. Bequests allow you to support Vermont's charitable needs without affecting your current finances. Additionally, bequests are fully deductible from estate taxes, and the VCF handles all administrative details, ensuring that your legacy continues to make an impact.

Testamentary Funds: Give you a flexible way to leave a lasting charitable legacy by designating assets from your estate to support the causes you care about. You can modify beneficiaries during your lifetime, ensuring your wishes are met, and the gift is fully deductible from estate taxes. This option allows you to give specific amounts, property, or a percentage of your estate, supporting nonprofits in your name.



Income Strategies for Giving

Whether you're looking to support meaningful causes while securing lifelong income, reduce taxes for future generations, or donate assets while retaining income, our flexible giving options—including Charitable Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and Charitable Lead Trusts—offer a tailored approach to philanthropy that aligns with your financial and charitable goals.

A Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) allows you to make a gift that provides you with a steady, fixed income for life, starting as early as age 60. It offers immediate tax benefits, and upon your passing, the remaining assets support a charitable cause of your choice. This flexible option helps secure your financial future while contributing to the causes you care about most.

A Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) is an irrevocable trust that allows the donor to donate assets to charity while still receiving income for a set period of time or for life. The remaining assets are then given to a qualified charity of the donor's choice.

A Charitable Lead Trust (CLT) supports charitable giving while reducing gift and estate taxes when passing assets to heirs. You transfer assets to a trustee (such as the VCF), which makes annual payments to a charitable fund during the trust's term. Once the trust ends, the remaining assets are distributed to your heirs, often with significant tax advantages.

Types of Assets You Can Donate

We understand that philanthropy comes in many forms. We're equipped to accept a wide variety of assets, allowing you to give in the way that best suits your financial situation and charitable goals. Here are some of the types of assets you can donate:

1 Cash

The simplest and most common form of donation, including checks and wire transfers.

2 Publicly Traded Securities

Stocks, bonds, and mutual funds can be donated directly, often providing tax advantages.

3 Closely Held Business Interests

This includes shares in S-corporations, C-corporations, limited partnerships, and LLCs.

4 Real Estate

Residential, commercial, or undeveloped land can be donated, either in full or as a partial interest.

5 Retirement Assets

IRA charitable rollovers or beneficiary designations from retirement accounts.

6 Life Insurance Policies

You can name VCF as a beneficiary or transfer ownership of a policy.

7 Over 72? IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

Direct a transfer from your IRA to the VCF, exclude the gift from your taxable income, and count it toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

8 Tangible Personal Property

Art, antiques, collectibles, and other valuable items.

Each type of asset donation comes with its own tax implications and procedures. Our team of philanthropic advisors can work with you and your financial advisors to determine the most effective way to structure your giving for maximum impact and tax efficiency.

Remember, non-cash assets often offer significant tax advantages. For example, donating appreciated securities allows you to avoid capital gains taxes while still receiving a charitable deduction for the full fair market value of the asset.

We're committed to making your giving as impactful and convenient as possible. No matter what type of asset you're considering donating, we're here to help guide you through the process and ensure your philanthropy aligns with your overall financial and charitable goals.



Want a sounding board?

Our philanthropic advisors love a good giving brainstorm.

Call **802-388-3355 opt. 5**.



Why open a giving account with the Vermont Community Foundation?

Opening a giving account or creating a fund at the Vermont Community Foundation is an impactful way to support the causes you care about while simplifying your charitable giving. Here are some of the advantages of partnering with VCF:

Personalized Service

Our team works closely with donors to understand their philanthropic goals, helping to craft a giving strategy that reflects their values and vision.

Sustained Impact

By working with VCF, you can ensure that your charitable giving has a lasting effect. Whether supporting short-term needs or creating a long-term legacy, we offer options to fit every philanthropic goal.

Local Expertise

We have deep connections and insights into Vermont's nonprofit landscape, allowing us to help you direct your giving to the areas of greatest need or opportunity.



The Power of Giving Together

Join forces with other fundholders through shared initiatives and collaborative efforts that achieve impact no one could accomplish alone—amplifying your generosity and fueling change across Vermont.

Flexibility

VCF offers a variety of fund options tailored to your preferences—whether you want to be hands-on with your giving or prefer a more passive approach.

Tax Benefits

As a public charity, donations to VCF funds are tax-deductible. We also handle all the administrative tasks, from investment management to grant distributions, making giving easier and more efficient.

Support a Trusted Vermont Institution

By opening a giving account with the VCF, you can directly invest in the strength and future of a cherished Vermont institution that helps our state, and its people thrive.

Informed, Connected, Impactful Giving

The Philanthropic Leadership Fund: Stepping up for Vermont

Leadership means more than responding to today's needs—it means anticipating tomorrow's challenges and opportunities. A leadership gift helps the Vermont Community Foundation's Philanthropic Leadership Fund do both. It ensures we can act quickly in times of crisis, drive change by sparking conversations that matter, and investing in long-term solutions that shape a stronger future for our state.

What Leadership Looks Like

Responding when crisis strikes: The devastating floods of 2023 and 2024 showed Vermont at both its most vulnerable and its most resilient. VCF quickly mobilized, raising over **$16 million** through donors and partners to provide rapid grants for food, shelter, farm relief, and long-term recovery.

Strengthening democracy: Through initiatives like ***Press Forward Vermont***, we're ensuring communities have access to trusted local news, vibrant civic discourse, and strong community leadership—all of which are essential for a healthy democracy.

Sparking conversations that matter: We bring bold ideas and voices to Vermont—like events with author ***Richard Reeves*** on the challenges facing boys and young men—ensuring tough issues don't go unspoken or unsolved. Our new documentary, ***Gone Guys***, created with the Tarrant Foundation, shines a light on this urgent issue and inspires action.

Building for the future: Through mission investing, we're turning charitable dollars into long-lasting impact across Vermont—strengthening housing, small businesses, and local economies. In St. Johnsbury, a



$500,000 mission investment helped the ***Northern Forest Center*** transform an underused building into housing for the missing middle and vibrant commercial spaces, addressing critical housing needs for the local workforce. Investments like these also support innovative Vermont businesses, such as ***WheelPad***, which designs accessible housing solutions, and community institutions like the ***Plainfield Co-op***, which received flexible financing to expand its operations and continue serving as a hub for local farmers and families.

Leadership gifts help VCF remain nimble, innovative, and deeply connected to the issues shaping Vermont's future.

Opportunity Gap

Closing the Opportunity Gap

We're grantmakers in our own right because of the donors and fundholders who have trusted us with discretionary resources. This critical work is powered by a team of dedicated professionals who bring deep expertise and vision to our commitment to addressing the opportunity gap. When you partner with VCF, you gain access to this wealth of knowledge and a network of connections that can significantly enhance your giving.

Economic Opportunity

We work to create opportunities for all Vermonters, ensuring that individuals and families—regardless of their background—have access to resources, financial security, and pathways to prosperity. This includes efforts to support affordable housing, create pathways to promising business development, and strengthen the social safety net that supports engagement in the workforce.

Education & Training

Access to quality education and skills training is essential for Vermont's future. We support programs that help students succeed in school, prepare for meaningful careers, and ensure lifelong learning opportunities. By investing in education and training, we help build pathways for economic mobility and a thriving VT economy.





Health & Wellbeing

Healthy communities are the cornerstone of a thriving state. We focus on initiatives that promote physical, social, and mental health, for all ages and communities as a whole. From bringing people together through the arts to expanding mental health support and making sure neighbors have healthy food, housing, and connection, investing in healthy communities helps Vermont stay strong and resilient.

Climate & the Environment

Vermont's natural beauty, diverse ecosystems, and working landscape are some of its greatest assets, and we are committed to nurturing them. Our efforts in this area include supporting climate resilience, stewardship initiatives, sustainable local agriculture development, and programs that address resilience in a changing climate—ensuring that future generations can enjoy a clean and sustainable environment.

Democracy, Trust, & Community Leadership

Strong communities are built on trust, collaboration, and active civic engagement. We invest in initiatives that strengthen democratic participation, nurture community leadership, and build trust between individuals, institutions, and local governments. This work helps ensure a healthy, functioning democracy and empowered connected communities.



Regardless of the causes that interest you, when you establish a fund with VCF, you're gaining a team of knowledgeable partners dedicated to helping you achieve your charitable goals. Our professionals work tirelessly to understand the landscape of need and opportunity in Vermont, so you can give confidently.



Trust in the Community

The Power of Unrestricted Giving with Community Impact Funds

Unrestricted giving means placing your gift where it's needed most—now and in the future. Instead of earmarking your donation for a specific cause or program, you're saying, *"I believe in this community. I trust the people who know it best to respond with care, creativity, and courage."*

And in Vermont, that trust goes a long way.

When you pool your gift through one of our Community Impact Funds, you become part of a strategic, statewide effort to meet the moment, whatever that moment may be. Your giving joins with others to reach trusted nonprofits across Vermont, guided by deep local knowledge and a commitment to lasting impact.

Your unrestricted gift fuels:

- Rapid response in times of crisis
- Bold ideas before they have a name
- Long-term investments in resilience and equity
- Our ability to listen deeply and act nimbly

In short, unrestricted gifts are the backbone of community-powered change.

Why Many of Our Fundholders Choose Unrestricted Giving

"I want my gift to be relevant, even if the world changes."

"I believe in local knowledge and responsive leadership."

"I don't have to control it. I just want it to matter."

We hear these things often. Unrestricted giving is deeply personal. It's a vote of confidence in Vermont and its future.



"He wanted to give back to the community he loved, and the Vermont Community Foundation allowed him to do that in a lasting and meaningful way."

— David Ahlfeld, Leonard's son

Donor Stories

Making a Difference Through VCF

We're proud to partner with donors who are passionate about making a difference across the state. Here are just a few inspiring examples of how their giving shows up in our communities.

Leonard Ahlfeld's Legacy in Manchester

After decades of visiting Vermont, Leonard Ahlfeld moved to Manchester to be closer to family and quickly felt at home among the forests and community he loved.

Before his passing, Leonard worked with the Vermont Community Foundation to create a designated fund using his required minimum distribution (RMD). His giving reflected his values: supporting Vermont Public, the Manchester Community Library, and the Community Food Cupboard.

He also chose to leave the remainder of his retirement account to his fund—easing the tax burden on his estate and ensuring annual support for the causes he cared about, in perpetuity.





Mary Hoffman's Legacy of Care

Mary Hoffman moved from Ohio to Vermont in 2005 and quickly came to believe in the power of Vermont's cultural, environmental, and civic life to bring people together and inspire future generations. Living at Wake Robin, Mary surrounded herself with a community that reflected her love of learning, creativity, and nature.

As her resources grew, she delighted in supporting more causes that mattered to her. She always followed the motto "trust but verify." Through careful planning—guided by her trust advisor and her VCF philanthropic advisor, Emilye Pelow Corbett—Mary made generous legacy gifts to the institutions she cherished: Shelburne Farms, Shelburne Museum, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, The Nature Conservancy, Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Community Foundation, and Wake Robin.

Her thoughtful generosity ensures that the values she held dear, including creativity, lifelong learning, environmental stewardship, and civic leadership, will continue to shape Vermont for generations to come.

Bruce and Lillian Venner: Building Better Lives in Vermont

After helping build over 90 homes with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, Bruce Venner was honored on his 85th birthday when his wife Lillian established a housing-focused fund at the Vermont Community Foundation.

"It was the most fitting gift for him," she said. "An increasing number of people are wondering how they'll pay their bills when they come due. We feel really blessed not to be in that position. We live simply. We've been able to educate our children and our grandchildren, and now we'd like to spend our money where it's needed."

Through a donor advised fund, the Venners also support a wide range of Vermont organizations—from free laundry services for people without homes to vibrant arts programming at the Flynn.

"It's a huge weight off my shoulders to write one check to the Community Foundation and have them distribute grants based on our priorities," said Lillian. *"The world is much more complex now, and they have a broader sense of need in Vermont than I ever will."*

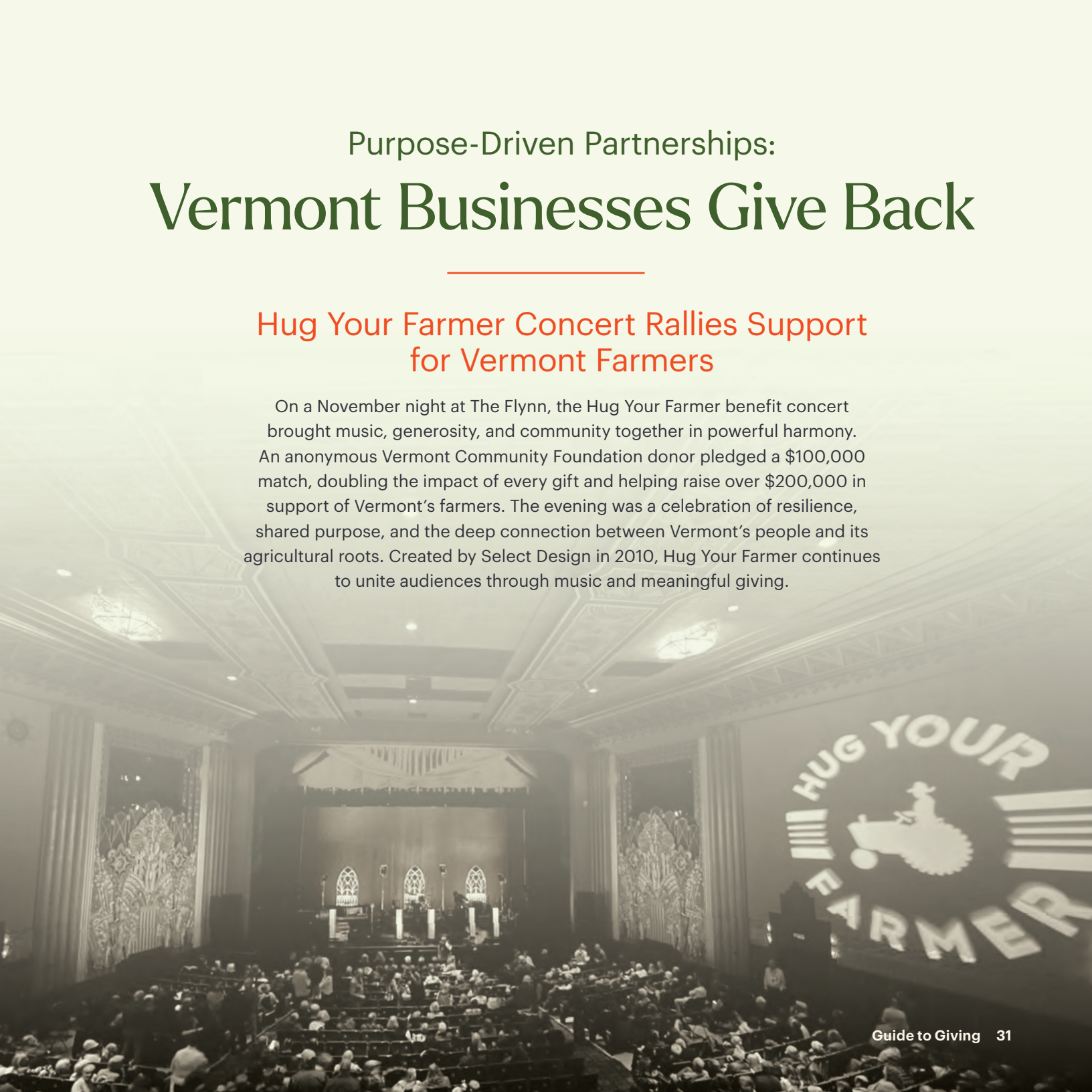


Purpose-Driven Partnerships:

Vermont Businesses Give Back

Hug Your Farmer Concert Rallies Support for Vermont Farmers

On a November night at The Flynn, the Hug Your Farmer benefit concert brought music, generosity, and community together in powerful harmony. An anonymous Vermont Community Foundation donor pledged a $100,000 match, doubling the impact of every gift and helping raise over $200,000 in support of Vermont's farmers. The evening was a celebration of resilience, shared purpose, and the deep connection between Vermont's people and its agricultural roots. Created by Select Design in 2010, Hug Your Farmer continues to unite audiences through music and meaningful giving.



Turning Music into Meals

At the 2025 National Life Group Do Good Fest®, the National Life campus became the heart of a celebration of music, community, and generosity. The Holly and Bob Miller Charitable Fund, a donor advised fund at the Vermont Community Foundation, matched every dollar raised up to $100,000. Together, this generosity doubled the impact and raised over $214,000 for the Vermont Foodbank to fight childhood hunger across the state. Our enduring collaboration with National Life Group continues to show how philanthropy and business together can shape a better Vermont.





Lawson's Finest Liquids and the Vermont Women's Fund Celebrate Women's Leadership

On International Women's Day, Lawson's Finest Liquids hosted a vibrant celebration of women's leadership in partnership with the Vermont Women's Fund (VWF). As part of their Good Brews for a Cause series, they released Powerhouse Ale, a limited-edition beer brewed just for the occasion, with proceeds benefiting VWF. The evening unfolded at the brewery with laughter, conversation, and community, and was emceed by Lawson's Finest CEO Adeline Druart. Guests heard a keynote from VWF Director Emily Bush and an inspiring panel of women business leaders who shared honest, powerful stories of resilience, authenticity, and leadership. As Emily shared, "Sean and Karen Lawson have pulled on every lever of their business to drive social impact, using their brand, product, culture, core values, and philanthropy."

Featured VCF Initiatives:

Do you love Vermont and love being part of something bigger?

Many of our fundholders choose to grow their impact by giving directly to an initiative that targets specific needs across Vermont identified by the VCF.

Here are a few examples:



Press Forward Vermont

Press Forward Vermont strengthens democracy by supporting reliable, accessible, and community-centered local news. Press Forward Vermont is a multi-year initiative to invest in Vermont's journalism landscape, foster collaboration, and ensure that every community has access to trusted information. This past year, the initiative took major steps forward, investing in the development of a new Vermont Journalism Coalition in partnership with the UVM Center for Community News and supporting a local shared news service at VTDigger. Together, these efforts are helping local media thrive and better serve Vermonters.
vermontcf.org/press-forward



The David R. Coates Fund for Vermont Disaster Relief

Disasters don't wait—and neither can relief. That's why the Vermont Community Foundation, in partnership with the leaders of the Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund (VDRF), created a new permanent fund to ensure Vermont is ready when the next crisis hits. Seeded with the remaining assets of the VDRF—established after Tropical Storm Irene and active through early 2025—the David R. Coates Fund for Vermont Disaster Relief stands ready to respond immediately. This fund delivers fast, flexible, and equitable support in the critical first days of a disaster—and stays with communities through the long road of recovery. Because rebuilding shouldn't depend on who you are or where you live.
vermontcf.org/vt-disaster-relief



Photo Credit: Terry Allen

Arts & Social Cohesion

In the 2024 Vermonter Poll, 93% of respondents agreed that opportunities to view and participate in arts and culture are important to thriving and healthy communities. Funded by a generous grant from a VCF donor advised fund, Arts & Social Cohesion supported projects strengthening connection and belonging across Vermont. Highlights include Unheard Stories, a Winooski afterschool program for refugee youth celebrating cultural identity; Acorn Youth Arts, a collaborative theater project by youth from Orange and Washington counties about growing up in rural Vermont; a 120-foot community mural centering Abenaki perspectives at Brattleboro's Retreat Farm; and in Hardwick, the Civic Standard's revival of a homespun, live game show played by locals— each fostering creativity, leadership, and social connection.
vermontcf.org/arts-social-cohesion



Village Trust

In 20 historic villages across the state, communities will breathe new life into the places that matter most—from reimagined general stores to vibrant community centers and much-needed housing. This transformational effort is powered by a partnership between the Vermont Community Foundation, Preservation Trust of Vermont, and the Vermont Council on Rural Development—with generous support from federal funding and local philanthropy. The Foundation provides early-stage grants, and will provide technical assistance, and planning support to help each village launch its own nonprofit trust, spark momentum, and seed a permanent community fund. These early, flexible investments are about more than just dollars—they're about giving local leaders the tools and trust to shape their own futures while preserving the character and heart of rural Vermont.
ptvermont.org/village-trust-initiative



Health Equity

To reduce health disparities and improve access to care for communities historically underserved by Vermont's health care systems, the Vermont Community Foundation partnered with the Vermont Department of Health to launch a bold and community-driven funding initiative. The Health Equity program demonstrated the power of collaboration between public and private entities. Through this initiative, over $8 million was awarded to 34 community-based organizations working to advance health equity across Vermont. Rooted in a commitment to community leadership, the program intentionally engaged people with lived experience in grant decision-making and simplified the application process to ensure funding was accessible to those best positioned to address local needs. Together, these efforts closed gaps, lifted voices, and built healthier, more inclusive communities across Vermont.
vermontcf.org/health-equity-report

Featured Nonprofits

AALV (Association of Africans Living in Vermont)

Rooted in Burlington and serving New Americans across the state, AALV empowers individuals and families from Africa and beyond to build meaningful, secure lives in Vermont.

With a focus on cultural connection, economic self-sufficiency, and equitable access to opportunity, AALV helps turn transition into thriving.

What began in the early 2000s as a grassroots support network has become one of Vermont's most vital multicultural service organizations. AALV provides direct services such as housing navigation, language access, employment support, youth programming, and victim advocacy. It also works at the systems level to advance equity in health care, education, and justice.

AALV's multilingual, multicultural team brings deep lived experience to the work. Whether assisting a newly arrived refugee or helping a longtime resident pursue citizenship, they walk alongside their clients with dignity, respect, and cultural awareness.

"AALV is building bridges not only for New Americans, but for the communities they're becoming part of," said Stacie Fagan, Vice President of Philanthropy at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their work represents the best of Vermont: welcoming, collaborative, and deeply human. It's the kind of community-centered leadership that strengthens equity, resilience, and belonging across our state."







Battenkill Valley Health Center

Battenkill Valley Health Center, located in Arlington, Vermont is a vital hub for accessible, community-based healthcare in the region.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Battenkill Valley Health Center serves patients of all ages and income levels, offering primary care, dental care, chronic disease management, behavioral health services, and more—regardless of ability to pay.

With a strong focus on whole-person care, the health center ensures that residents in this rural corner of Vermont can receive consistent, high-quality health care close to home. By integrating behavioral and physical health services under one roof, Battenkill Valley Health Center helps address the complex and interconnected needs of its patients, many of whom face barriers related to transportation, insurance, or economic hardship.

"The Battenkill Valley Health Center is a lifeline for the nearly 4,000 patients it serves, focusing on southwestern Vermont," said Elisabeth Marx, Senior Philanthropic Advisor at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their commitment to compassionate, comprehensive care reflects the very best of what community health can be and has earned them national ranking in the top 10% for clinical quality. By meeting people where they are and treating each patient with dignity, they are not just improving individual outcomes, they're building a healthier, more resilient region for all."

Battenkill Valley Health Center is proud to serve as Bennington County's FQHC, and is honored to serve the residents of Vermont alongside their 10 peer FQHCs throughout the State.

Brandon Free Public Library

Near the Neshobe River in downtown Brandon, the Brandon Free Public Library is more than a place to borrow books, it's a gathering space, a learning center, and a cornerstone of community life.

For over a century, this historic library has served as a trusted resource for residents of all ages. In recent years, its mission has grown to meet evolving needs: offering early literacy programs, job search assistance, technology access, summer meals for kids, and even art and music workshops. Whether someone is seeking a quiet place to read, free Wi-Fi to apply for a job, or a warm welcome on a hard day, the library is there.

The library operates with deep local knowledge and a spirit of openness. Its programming reflects the diversity of its patrons, from toddlers to elders, and responds to the challenges facing rural communities with creativity and care.

"The Brandon Free Library is a beautiful example of how local libraries adapt to serve their towns—not just as book lenders, but as trusted hubs of connection," said Alyssa DeBella, grants specialist at the Vermont Community Foundation. "They offer opportunities for learning, belonging, and joy. In a rural town, that kind of presence is everything."





Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)

CVOEO provides thousands of Vermonters with essential support—food, fuel, and housing—in times of crisis, while also responding to urgent community needs like emergency housing and services for people experiencing homelessness.

Beyond immediate assistance, CVOEO helps neighbors build stronger futures through financial education, school readiness programs, holistic community support, and advocacy for policies that promote equity and inclusion.

With 11 distinct yet interconnected programs such as Feeding Champlain Valley, Voices Against Violence, Statewide Housing Advocacy, Financial Futures, Weatherization, and Head Start, CVOEO is fighting poverty and building a community where every person is valued, has access to opportunity, and can achieve their full potential.

"CVOEO meets people where they are and walks alongside them toward greater security and opportunity," said Emilye Pelow Corbett, director of planned giving at the Vermont Community Foundation. "They remind us that fighting financial inequality isn't just about meeting today's needs, it's about investing in people's futures, so that the next chapter of their lives can be stronger than the last."

Charter House Coalition

In the heart of Middlebury, Charter House Coalition is providing more than meals and shelter, it's building a compassionate, community-based model of care for neighbors facing home and food insecurity in Addison County.

What began as a simple meal program at the Charter House—an old parsonage turned community space—has grown into a deeply trusted nonprofit offering year-round emergency housing, transitional shelter, and daily meals to individuals in need. Volunteers from faith groups, local businesses, and students from nearby schools all play a part, reflecting the Coalition's belief that everyone has a role to play in creating a caring community.

Charter House combines practical support with connection. Residents in their housing programs receive not just a roof over their heads, but case management, encouragement, and a path toward greater stability. Their work extends beyond the shelter out into the community with Outreach staff meeting people where they are in tents, cars and doorways.

"Charter House shows what's possible when a community comes together to meet basic needs with heart and compassion," said Karen Scott, grants coordinator for strategic partnerships at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their model is grounded in respect, powered by volunteers, and built to respond not just to crisis, but to long-term change. It's a quiet force for good in Addison County."





Photo Credit: Civic Standard

The Civic Standard

Based in Hardwick, Vermont, the Civic Standard is redefining what it means to build community by creating spaces where everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate.

Through collaborative, inclusive offerings like a weekly community meal, live music performances in their Main Street living room, original theater productions staged in unexpected places like the American Legion, and youth-led initiatives such as the Hardwick Skatepark Collective, the Civic invites neighbors to connect across difference, share ideas, and build local resiliency.

By centering curiosity, collaboration, and creativity, the Civic fosters an open dialogue and engagement that bridges divides and celebrates rural identity. Through recruitment and regular communication with all different parts of their community, they ensure their events become opportunities for disparate individuals and groups to come together and visit. Their work is rooted in the belief that growing a shared and civically-minded culture is crucial to the survival of their small, rural community.

"The Civic Standard is a vibrant example of how community can be built from the ground up—one conversation, one shared meal, and one celebration at a time," said Jane Mulcahy, grants coordinator for competitive grantmaking at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their energy and vision remind us all that connection is one of the most powerful tools we have to create thriving, resilient towns."

The Current

The Current, located in Stowe, is a vibrant center for contemporary art dedicated to enriching the community through impactful exhibitions and educational programs.

Formerly known as the Helen Day Art Center, The Current showcases works from both internationally acclaimed and emerging artists, offering residents and visitors access to thought-provoking art experiences.

In addition to its exhibitions, The Current offers a range of educational opportunities for all ages. Their youth and teen arts education programs integrate STEAM learning and curriculum-based art education, fostering creativity and critical thinking among students from Pre-K through 12th grade. Adult classes and workshops further ensure that art remains an accessible and integral part of lifelong learning in the community.

"The Current is a cultural heartbeat not just for Stowe, but for the surrounding communities as well," said Dawn Perry, director of marketing at the Vermont Community Foundation. "On any given summer day, the lawn around the gazebo is alive with art camp kids sketching in the grass, painting or gathering under the shade to share ideas and snacks. Inside the gallery, the latest exhibit, It Often Rhymes, invites us to consider how art can speak to power, amplify unheard voices, and imagine a more inclusive democracy. It's that combination of playful community connection and thoughtful conversation that makes The Current's work so important."





Downstreet Housing & Community Development

In central Vermont, Downstreet Housing & Community Development is reimagining what affordable housing can look like—safe, sustainable, and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

For more than 35 years, Downstreet has worked to increase access to quality, affordable homes while investing in the social and economic wellbeing of residents across Washington, Orange, and Lamoille counties. From renovating historic buildings into energy-efficient apartments to supporting first-time homebuyers and individuals in recovery, Downstreet is meeting housing needs with creativity and care.

Their work goes beyond bricks and mortar. Through resident services, supportive housing programs, and partnerships with mental health and recovery organizations, Downstreet recognizes that housing is foundational, but true stability also requires connection and opportunity.

"Downstreet understands that housing is about more than having a place to sleep, it's about having a place to belong," said Holly Morehouse, vice president of community impact at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their work is thoughtful, community-rooted, and essential to Vermont's future. It's the kind of long-term investment that builds both homes and hope."

Interaction Youth Services & Restorative Justice

Based in Brattleboro, Interaction Youth Services & Restorative Justice is a quiet powerhouse in the field of youth mental health, offering connection, consistency, and compassion to young people navigating some of life's hardest moments.

Through street outreach, drop-in services, behavioral health services, transitional housing, and restorative justice programs, Interaction meets youth where they are—literally and emotionally. Their work reaches teens and young adults facing housing instability, family conflict, trauma, or mental health challenges, many of whom have fallen through the cracks of more traditional systems.

At the heart of the organization is a belief in the power of relationships. Whether it's a safe place to sleep, a ride to an appointment, or simply a trusted adult to talk to, Interaction creates moments of stability that can become turning points in a young person's life.

Interaction's work has been closely connected to the growth of restorative justice in Vermont for the past 40 years, serving both youth and adults while pioneering new community restorative justice programs.

"Interaction Youth Services is more than a lifeline for young people in crisis or facing mental health challenges. It is a place where hope is restored and trust can be rebuilt." said Evelyn Gearty, David Rahr community philanthropy program assistant fellow at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Through its innovative after-school program and community center, Friends for Change, the organization shows the power of youth-led spaces, supportive peer connections, and opportunities to explore personal interests. These experiences not only strengthen mental wellness but also help young people believe in their future."



Jenna's Promise

Jenna's Promise, based in Johnson, Vermont, is changing the way we think about recovery by linking healing with economic opportunity, social connection, and community revitalization.

Founded by the Tatro family after the loss of their daughter, Jenna, to substance use disorder, the organization has grown into one of the most innovative models in the country for long-term recovery. At the heart of Jenna's Promise is a structured, program-based recovery housing system rooted in dignity, accountability, and trauma-informed care. The Rae of Hope, Vermont's first Level 3 certified recovery residence, provides women with a safe and supportive place to heal and grow.

But the model goes far beyond housing. Jenna's Promise reintegrates people into the workforce and the community through a growing network of social enterprises, including a Main Street café, a coffee roastery, a surplus goods store, and an appliance store. These businesses offer employment, job training, and purpose for residents and local community members alike.

All of this is anchored by Jenna's House, a community hub embraced by the town as "the new heart of Johnson." Here, people can attend wellness gatherings like yoga and meditation, join an evening recovery meeting, participate in a community conversation, or simply gather with neighbors. Jenna's House is a place where the entire community comes together—where healing and connection are made visible. Backed by a passionate team and a deeply committed local community, Jenna's Promise is not only reducing stigma but also stitching communities back together and helping people reclaim their lives through work, wellness, and belonging.

"Jenna's Promise creates a space for holistic recovery, surrounded by care," said Andy Barker, program officer at the Vermont Community Foundation. "It works—helping many people find wellness and stability. It's a powerful example of how communities can come together to lift people up with love, support, and opportunity."





Mission Farm

Mission Farm, an entity of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, is a place of respite, renewal, and connection rooted in more than a century of service.

Located on 180 acres in Killington, the land includes the Ottauquechee River, dramatic cliffsides, pollinator meadows, orchards, and mixed forest, offering space for reflection, engagement, and healing.

The Church of Our Saviour, built in 1895, continues to serve as a gathering space for worship and community events. Recent additions like the Odeon amphitheater, the Kitchen culinary incubator and community center, and the Heminway Guest House support Mission Farm's expanding role as a setting for local enterprise and inclusive community engagement. Through initiatives that promote collaborative land stewardship, farm-to-table partnerships, and community-rooted enterprise, Mission Farm invites people from all walks of life to join in cultivating a more connected and resilient Vermont.

Its work is grounded in four core commitments: Healing, by offering opportunities for individuals and groups to reflect and rebuild their connection to the natural world and the fullness of life; Reconciliation, by fostering community and cooperative work aligned with nature; Renewal, by encouraging new ventures, refreshed commitments, and reimagined approaches to ongoing challenges; and Economic Sustainability, by designing programs that are self-supporting and welcoming proposals from outcome-aligned individuals, businesses, and organizations.

"Mission Farm offers something rare and powerful in today's world; a space where people can reconnect with the land, with each other, and with a sense of purpose," said Emily Bush, director of the Vermont Women's Fund. "Their work touches so many of the issues we care about, such as economic equity, environmental healing, and social belonging, all while centering the voices of women and underrepresented communities. It's a place where change is both planted and nurtured."



The Mitzvah Fund

The Mitzvah Fund, based in Montpelier, provides essential veterinary care to companion animals of low-income seniors, veterans, disabled first responders, victims of domestic violence, and unhoused individuals in Central Vermont.

By offering health assessments, and non-emergency surgical and dental procedures, the organization ensures that pets receive necessary medical attention, maintaining their quality of life and alleviating emotional and financial stress for their owners.

In 2022, The Mitzvah Fund expanded its reach by acquiring a 42-foot mobile veterinary clinic, affectionately known as "Baby Huey." This mobile unit includes all the equipment and capacity the organization's team of veterinary professionals need to deliver compassionate care across Central Vermont. Through partnerships with area social service and public safety organizations, like the Central Vermont Council on Aging, the Mitzvah Fund helps preserve the human-animal bond which is so beneficial for the physical and mental health of our most vulnerable neighbors.

"The Mitzvah Fund exemplifies the profound impact that compassionate care can have on both animals and their human companions," said Martha Trombley Oakes, director of philanthropy at the Vermont Community Foundation. "By reducing barriers to veterinary services, they not only enhance the well-being of pets but also provide invaluable support to individuals who might otherwise struggle to access care due to mobility, health, or geographic limitations. It's initiatives like these that strengthen the fabric of our communities."



The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) is a Richmond-based cornerstone of Vermont's agricultural community, dedicated to cultivating a thriving local food system that is healthy, sustainable, and accessible to all.

For over 50 years, NOFA-VT and its members have strengthened the local food system through education, technical assistance, advocacy, and more—ensuring that organic and regenerative farming practices remain at the heart of Vermont's working landscape

NOFA-VT's workshops and conferences bring farmers, gardeners, and food enthusiasts together to share knowledge, strengthen practices, and foster innovation in sustainable agriculture. Alongside its Farm Share Program, which connects low-income Vermonters with farm-fresh CSA shares, NOFA-VT also offers farmer training, business support, and policy advocacy. In times of crisis, such as the floods of 2023 and 2024, its Vermont Farmer Emergency Fund has provided rapid financial relief to help farms recover and rebuild.

And it's not just about food. It's about Vermont's economy. By supporting local producers and strengthening regional supply chains, NOFA-VT is driving economic development through food system resilience.

"NOFA-VT is more than an advocate for farmers, it's a partner in building the resilient food system that Vermonters depend on," said Jennifer duToit Barrett, Director of Grants at the Vermont Community Foundation. "NOFA-VT is investing in Vermont's future—creating jobs, supporting small businesses, and helping farms adapt to changing conditions. It's economic development with deep roots in community. They work to ensure that local food, organic practices, and farm communities remain strong for generations to come."

Umbrella of St. Johnsbury

For five decades, Umbrella has provided confidential shelter, crisis services, and long-term advocacy to women, children, and others in need across Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties.



The organization is more than a crisis response agency, it's also a leader in prevention education, community outreach, and equity work that seeks to address the root causes of violence.

Umbrella's approach is holistic. In addition to survivor support, they are also leading efforts to interrupt cycles of harm by working directly with people who use violence. Their Spark warmline offers a confidential, voluntary pathway for people to self-refer to prevention programs before violence escalates. The organization also facilitates court-ordered accountability programs that emphasize responsibility, reflection, and behavioral change—recognizing that true safety requires community-wide transformation.

In recent years, Umbrella has expanded its focus on economic justice, working to ensure that survivors have access not just to safety, but to housing, employment, and autonomy. Its work with youth, through school-based prevention programs and support groups, aims to break cycles before they begin.

"Umbrella meets people at their most vulnerable moments with compassion and strength," said Chelsea Lord, senior philanthropic advisor at the Vermont Community Foundation. "But they don't stop there. Their work is about helping people reclaim their lives and helping communities build new pathways rooted in dignity and healing. Their work is essential and deeply transformative."

Have a cause that matters to you but don't know where to start?

Let's connect. Call **802-388-3355 opt. 5**.





Photo Credit: Glenn Russell

VTDigger

In a time of rapid change and shrinking newsrooms, VTDigger is a steadfast source of in-depth, nonpartisan journalism serving communities across Vermont. From State House coverage to local investigations, the nonprofit newsroom helps Vermonters make informed decisions.

Founded in 2009, VTDigger has grown into one of the most trusted news sources in the state, delivering daily reporting on politics, health care, the environment, education, and more. Its commitment to transparency and public service journalism reaches readers in every county, filling gaps left by traditional print media and giving voice to issues that matter most in rural communities. And it is also a nationally recognized innovator in collaboration strategies to strengthen newsrooms around the state. Through shared content and reporting resources, VTDigger is forging a future for Vermont's local news ecosystem, ensuring that communities, large and small, continue to have access to high-quality, locally grounded reporting.

As local journalism faces unprecedented threats, support for independent outlets like VTDigger is more vital than ever. Individual giving plays a key role in keeping the newsroom strong, responsive, and free to all.

"VTDigger does more than report the news. It helps knit together the civic fabric of our state," said Jessie Schmidt, director of strategic initiatives at the Vermont Community Foundation. "Their investigative work, their deep policy coverage, their commitment to rural reporting—this is the kind of journalism that strengthens civic engagement from the ground up. VTDigger builds a more informed, engaged, and resilient Vermont."

About the VCF

The Vermont Community Foundation was established in 1986 as an enduring source of philanthropic support for Vermont communities. The VCF and its partners put nearly $80 million annually to work in Vermont communities and beyond. Our team is a lively crew of problem-solvers, blending small-town charm with big-hearted philanthropy to uplift Vermont's vibrant communities. If you want to work with experts to navigate your charitable journey and grow your philanthropic impact, this is the place to do it. We're here to empower you and ensure your giving journey is meaningful and impactful.

Ways to Be Involved

Join the VCF in making a difference across the state.

Give Where It's Needed Most

Make an unrestricted gift to support urgent needs, long-term solutions, and communities often left behind.

vermontcf.org/give-now

Plan for the Future

Leave a legacy through a bequest, trust, or other planned gift.

vermontcf.org/legacy-giving/

Partner on Your Philanthropy

Have a cause you care about? We'll help you create a giving plan that fits.

vermontcf.org/lets-connect

Engage and Learn

Join VCF events, stay informed about local issues, or explore your values with our Giving Quiz.

vermontcf.org/giving-quiz



Your Philanthropy and Donor Impact Teams



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Contact us:

Call **802-388-3355 opt. 5**.

Or send an email to

philanthropy@vermontcf.org.

"Real change in Vermont happens when generous people step up to lead alongside VCF. The Philanthropic Leadership Fund supports our ability to act boldly, to pilot new ideas, respond quickly to emerging needs, and bring people together around what matters most. Every gift to this fund helps shape what's possible for Vermont. Leadership donors are the quiet architects of Vermont's future. Their giving isn't just generous, it's generative."

— Kate Neubauer, Director of Leadership Giving at the Vermont Community Foundation



Notes:

Notes:

"When we give together, we don't just meet urgent needs—we build lasting solutions. The 2023 & 2024 flooding reminded us how powerful we can be when we act collectively. Now we have a chance to take that same energy and apply it to the long-standing challenges Vermont has been facing for years. Housing. Mental health. Climate resilience. Connection. These are not small issues, but in a place like Vermont, with people who care this deeply, real change is possible."

— Holly Morehouse, Vice President of Community Impact, Vermont Community Foundation

Ready to connect with one of our advisors?

Reach out today to **philanthropy@vermontcf.org** or **802-388-3355** opt 5. to start exploring how we can help you achieve your charitable goals.

Vermont Community Foundation