

2014 Vermont Economic Justice Grant Recipients



Clarina Howard Nichols Center \$10,000

Safety Beyond Shelter: Affordable Housing for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence

PO Box 517, Morrisville, VT

Clarina Howard Nichols Center (Clarina) works to end domestic and sexual violence in Lamoille County through advocacy, outreach and social change. Clarina provides survivor centered support for individuals and families affected by sexual, dating and domestic violence, stalking and trafficking as well as training and technical assistance to community partners. Safety Beyond Shelter will provide a clear means to amplify survivors' voices in questions of economic justice related to affordable housing in Lamoille County and across Vermont. To be able to speak, survivors of sexual and domestic violence first need to be housed. With basic needs met, Clarina will create space for survivors to organize for economic justice and affordable housing as they see fit, and work to ensure that these voices are heard in Lamoille County, across Vermont and at the national level.

COVE - Community of Vermont Elders \$10,000

Empowering Elders: Health and Economic Security

P.O. Box 1276, Montpelier, VT

COVE's mission is to promote and protect a higher quality of life for Vermont's elders, through advocacy and education. COVE works with, and for, elder Vermonters - and the organizations that serve them - to identify, interpret and respond to critical issues that impact their dignity, security and wellbeing. COVE aims to maintain and enhance the level of their advocacy work and involve more elders. To do so, COVE will recruit and train 15 additional volunteers to serve as legislative monitors, workshop presenters, and senior center educators. COVE will bring information on important issues impacting elders' health and economic security to 50 senior centers and other locations throughout Vermont. As part of much of this work, COVE will receive valuable input from participants to help guide them in addressing elders' needs.

Dress for Success Burlington \$15,000

Dress for Success Career Center

95 Saint Paul Street, Suite 110, Burlington, VT

The mission of Dress for Success Burlington is to promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support, and career development tools to help them thrive in work and in life. Dress for Success aims to offer a continuum of services from pre-employment, job interview and presenting, to post-employment support. Funds were provided in support of expanding the Career Center to offer a course that prepares women in the process of job searching; including goal development, timelines and future planning. Dress for Success will also offer in-class computer training, as many clients have a limited skill set with computers. Lastly, this initiative will develop a mentoring program to retain newly employed women in their jobs, through a Professional Women's Group.

Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Inc. \$10,000

Increasing Access to Healthy Food in the Northeast Kingdom

194 Main Street, Suite 301, Newport, VT

Vermont Farm-to-School (GMFTS)'s mission is to restore and strengthen local food systems in Vermont by promoting positive economic and educational relationships between schools, farms, and communities. Their vision is to build local food systems in Vermont that promote environmental stewardship, create sustainable local economies, and nurture the health and wellbeing of our children and our communities. Green Mountain Farm-to-School is addressing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of poverty by increasing access to healthy and affordable foods in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. After undergoing an intensive strategic planning process over the last year, GMFTS now has a road map for the future of their work. Over the next year, GMFTS will increase access to healthy and affordable food in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont through capacity building, resource development, and technical assistance activities at all stages of the food system.

Mercy Connections

\$10,000

Mercy Connections' Social Enterprise and Marketplace

255 South Champlain St., Suite 8, Burlington, VT

Mercy Connections mission is to nurture people toward greater self-sufficiency through education, mentoring, entrepreneurial skill-building, and community-engagement opportunities. Marginalized Vermonters will move toward greater self-sufficiency through entrepreneurial and leadership activities, designing and running a Mercy Connections Marketplace and collaborating in developing a Mercy Social Enterprise. This combined effort will build community engagement, establish new business partnerships & generate income for Mercy Connections and its constituency, strengthening the organization's mission. Moving from a model that reinforces receiving charity to one that is market-based empowers individuals and non-profits to address social problems in new ways. This initiative promotes constituent engagement, income and responsibility while creating a new opportunity for long-term sustainability of Mercy Connections.

Salvation Farms

\$20,000

Building Stability for the Vermont Commodity Program

PO Box 1174, Morrisville, VT

Salvation Farms (SF) increases resilience in Vermont's food system through agricultural surplus management by fostering collaborative cross-sector partnerships that create efficient management practices for Vermont's farm surplus through the engagement and utilization of available resources, skills and knowledge. Salvation Farms seeks to reduce food loss on Vermont farms and increase access to wholesome, regionally produced foods by Vermont's vulnerable populations. SF will achieve this by creating an in-state commodity system designed to proactively manage Vermont's surplus farm foods. SF has been successful in piloting the concepts of aggregating, assessing quality, and packing raw surplus crops and minimal processing of surplus crops into frozen products since the summer of 2012. Funds will be applied to continue developing the Vermont Commodity Program, specifically to cover personnel expenses associated with staffing a Program Director position.

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

\$15,000

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

275 Northgate Road, Burlington, Vermont

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC) is committed to ensure that all Vermonters, especially low-income people and those with special needs, have safe, adequate and affordable housing. VAHC encourages resident participation and control in their housing; advocates for preservation of existing housing, renter protection, and development of new perpetually-affordable housing; promotes recognition of housing as a basic right; and encourages use of innovative means to preserve and increase VT's affordable housing stock. The Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition received renewed general operating funding for their four core programs: (1) education and policy development at the federal and state levels; (2) collaboration with the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH); (3) low-income resident organizing and leadership development; and (4) building support for affordable housing through a public awareness

campaign. These activities will help create fundamental change for low-income Vermonters by increasing access to safe and affordable housing, reducing homelessness, and empowering disenfranchised residents living in existing affordable housing developments, many of whom are often missing at the table when key decisions are made affecting their housing.

Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

\$10,000

Family to Family Peer Support and Leadership

P.O. Box 1577, Williston, VT

The Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is a non-profit, family-run, family support organization supporting families of children, youth and young adults in transition experiencing or, at risk to experience, emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges. The Federation is committed to providing families with peer support and information in order to make informed decisions, empowering families, youth and young adults to navigate service and support systems. Funding was provided to support and empower families in poverty, in which children/parents have a disability, and in complex situations through the Family to Family Peer Support Program. Families are partnering with the Agency of Human Services, to bring the family perspective to decisions made about services within the Integrated Family Services initiative. AHS and Counseling Services of Addison, CSAC, have contributed funds to this demonstration project, which is showing how Peer Supports and empowerment can bend the curve for families in complex situations, help them to become more self-sufficient, and empower them to be a voice of experience to impact services and to prioritize how funding is spent to be more in line with what families really need.

Vermont Works for Women

\$5,000

FRESH Food

32A Malletts Bay Avenue, Winooski, VT

Vermont Works for Women helps women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue, and excel in work that leads to economic independence. FRESH Food is an innovative culinary training program that equips women and youth who have barriers to employment with job skills. Trainees assist professional chefs in preparing 6,000 healthy, nutritious meals per month for local childcare centers and youth programs in Chittenden County. As a member of the Vermont Fresh Network, FRESH Food collaborates with Vermont farmers and vendors, locally sourcing about twenty-five percent of its food. Renewed funding support was provided as the program transitions out of its "start up" phase and toward a sustainable social enterprise model by streamlining operations, enhancing efficiency, and maximizing training opportunities.

VSA Vermont

\$20,000

Start with the Arts (SWTA) Preschool Literacy Program

20 West Canal Street, Winooski, VT

VSA Vermont uses the magic of the arts to enhance the capabilities and increase the confidence of children and adults with disabilities. Start with the Arts (SWTA) combines arts-based literacy activities for Vermont's most isolated, low-income children, ages birth-5, at 42 rural registered childcare homes and small licensed centers across Vermont. SWTA also provides professional development for one of the lowest paid groups of workers, childcare workers. SWTA gives Vermont children of all abilities the literacy and creative learning strategies they will need to succeed in school, and helps low-income childcare providers advance in skills, recognition, and access to increased subsidies. By the end of this 7-month program, childcare providers have created and delivered 16 of their own arts-based literacy activities, ensuring confidence, skill, and habit in providing quality early education long-term.

Total \$ 125,000