

SUMMER 2016

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Kernels



Vermont Foodbank

www.vtfoodbank.org

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FEEDING AMERICA



Environmental Leaders: Rescuing Food, Feeding Vermont

Food banks were founded on the notion that food going to waste could be rescued and shared with people struggling with hunger.

Intended or not, food banks also began providing an important service to the environment by rescuing food that might otherwise head to a landfill and release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

For 30 years, the Vermont Foodbank has worked with food manufacturers and retailers to divert wholesome food away from these landfills and onto the table for

families in need. In 2014, the Vermont Foodbank faced new challenges around fresh rescue, as the amount and types of donated food started to change. Hannaford Supermarkets had perishable food to donate that the Foodbank was having difficulty retrieving because of volume, location, and frequency of pick-ups. At the same time, Vermont's universal recycling law was being discussed, and implementation for large generators, like grocery stores, would begin in July of that year. If we wanted those perishables to be donated rather than composted, we needed to supply the infrastructure. The Foodbank started the conversation with partner food shelves and meal sites about how to capture those donations, and a re-vamped Fresh Rescue Program was born.

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John Sayles joins Vermont Foodbank staff and volunteer in welcoming Senator Leahy to the Rutland Distribution Center.

NOTE from the CEO

Like all good communicators, we like to repeat our core message over and over: everyone should have enough nutritious food to eat to live a healthy, happy, and engaged life. Your Foodbank affects Vermont communities in other ways too. In this issue of Kernels, we explore the environmental impact of food banking here in Vermont. Food waste is a topic much discussed these days, and rightly so. The United States wastes an astounding amount of food. According to the USDA, in 2010, 133 billion pounds, or 31 percent, of the available consumer food supply went uneaten (USDA, Economic Research Service, 2014). There are human, environmental, and economic costs to all of this waste, and safely connecting edible food with neighbors who cannot afford it is the most efficient solution (learn more at vtfoodbank.org/2016/07/food-waste.html). Every day your Foodbank directs rescued food to families, children, and seniors who can't afford enough food.

In fact, your Foodbank is the most effective food waste reduction effort in the state, and has been for 30 years. Your support allows partnerships of farmers, retailers, wholesalers, government agencies, and nonprofits to bring food to our neighbors' dinner tables throughout the year. Regular pickups at Hannaford, Price Chopper, and Vermont's other food retailers result in millions of pounds of produce, dairy, meat, and groceries that would otherwise go to waste, going instead to our neighbors who can't afford enough nutritious food. Some food goes to the Community Kitchen Academy in Burlington and Barre, where it is transformed into fabulous dishes and sent home from food shelves as frozen servings. Farmers know to call us when produce that is still fresh and delicious won't make it to market. That local produce can make it

to a VeggieVanGo event at a hospital, school, or low income housing site, allowing our neighbors to make fresh vegetables and fruit a regular part of their meals.

Partnering with the state Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), your Foodbank is deeply involved in implementing Vermont's universal recycling law (Act 148). The law's first priority is to get edible food to people who need it safely and efficiently. We partner with ANR to educate everyone about the new law, teach our fellow Vermonters how to reduce food waste at home, and encourage the safe donation of edible food to the Foodbank and its community partners. If that's not possible, we teach Vermonters how to compost, so those food scraps can enhance our soils and grow more local food. As implementation continues, more opportunities open up, and we're poised to capture the benefits.

So the next time someone asks you if you support environmental causes, you can say "Yes, I support the Vermont Foodbank. It's the most efficient and effective solution to food waste."

You can also help the environment by becoming a sustaining monthly donor. Your gifts can automatically be transferred from your bank account, saving time and effort and reducing money spent on mail. Please give generously to make our state a better place to live, work, and play.

Thank you.

John Sayles, CEO



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Rescuing Food, Feeding Vermont

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One aspect of the program would include activating our statewide network of agencies, connecting partner food shelves and meal sites directly with area Hannaford supermarkets to rescue food and keep perishable food local. Our pilot pickup was at the Milton Hannaford. We identified two participating partners, Milton Family Center and Northwest Family Foods, who started picking up produce, bread, bakery items, and frozen meat throughout the week.

In the first year of that program, Milton Family Center reported great success. According to Cheryl Alwine, Food Shelf Coordinator, “The Fresh Rescue Program has been fabulous; much of it is in very good condition. The produce usually lasts from one pickup to the next, so most people coming in for food shelf food are getting a bag of vegetables or fruit, many times both. Last week, we had so much fruit—apples, oranges, and pears!”

Northwest Family Foods reported a 55 percent increase in food shelf visits. They attribute the increase not to new visitors but to more frequent use by those already being served, in part because they were able to offer better fresh food more reliably than ever before.

Not only do our Fresh Rescue partners see the program as highly beneficial to their communities, but Hannaford

also considers the commitment to hunger alleviation as a core part of its mission. “We have been working hard with the Vermont Foodbank and local pantries across the state to ensure that nutritious fruit, vegetables, and other fresh food is rescued regularly by our stores, so that it can be provided to Vermonters at risk of going hungry,” said Ben Theriault, Hannaford’s Director of Operations in Vermont. “In addition to the hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh food Hannaford stores donated in Vermont last year, we are working as a company with our partners to improve their ability to handle fresh food, including a \$75,000 donation by the Hannaford Charitable Foundation to the Foodbank late last year toward the purchase of equipment that substantially increased the volume of fresh food processed by its Rutland Distribution Center. This food is too important to hungry Vermonters to be wasted.”

By the end of the first year of the program, 16 Fresh Rescue partners collected 347,000 pounds of food that would have otherwise gone to waste. Today, 40 Fresh Rescue partnerships exist throughout the state, and more than a million pounds of fresh food is being saved from the dumpster and shared with Vermonters who need it the most.



Program Highlight

Sustainability Through Giving: Sustaining Monthly Donor Program

Here at the Vermont Foodbank, the Sustaining Monthly Donor program is just one of our many approaches to sustainability, fueled by a network of people all working together to keep the Foodbank vibrant and better able help Vermonters in need day in and day out.

A recurring gift is just what it sounds like—the option to give automatically on a monthly basis. Each month nearly 1,000 dedicated donors easily and conveniently make a recurring gift— and become part of a special community that is a lifeline to our most vulnerable neighbors throughout the year.

Sustaining monthly donors are uniquely connected to the people they are helping. A monthly gift of **\$40 provides a family of four with a nutritious meal every day for a month.** Our sustainers like that their regular donations amount to a significant impact by the end of the year. And they enjoy the convenience of automatic giving — fewer mailing requests and the peace of mind that they are doing their part. Because monthly gifts limit the amount of printed material we generate, this program requires less time to manage and reduces our environmental impact, freeing up resources. Every penny needs to count at the Foodbank.

Monthly investments add up quickly and make a real difference. They support our long-term planning, helping us make commitments to our neighbors in need, year after year. Sustainers maintain those vital core programs that ensure that no one in Vermont goes hungry. **Monthly donors more than cover the cost of keeping our entire fleet of seven food delivery trucks on the road all year round.** The heart of our mission is getting food to people when and where they need it, and Sustainers make it happen.

John Sayles, Vermont Foodbank CEO and a monthly donor himself, stresses how important this community is to helping the Foodbank create positive change and real impact when and where it matters most. “Monthly donors are important; they give us the confidence and flexibility we need to get the job done. It takes persistence to fight a complex problem like hunger, and I’m grateful that so many people have made this commitment,” says Sayles.

Consider moving toward greater sustainability with your giving by becoming a monthly donor! Join this community to make an enduring gift to the Foodbank and our Vermont communities.

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The Vermont Foodbank Receives Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence

The Vermont Foodbank received a 2016 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence, recognizing its work on food rescue initiatives that have **diverted more than four million pounds of waste into consumable food**. The close partnership on food rescue between the Foodbank and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, which grew out of the new universal recycling law (Act 148), has gained national recognition. Awards were presented to a variety of organizations across Vermont for work that promotes environmental sustainability.

"These projects contribute significantly to Vermont's environmental quality and encourage others to take similar actions to protect our resources," said Deb Markowitz, secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. "They demonstrate the importance of innovation and partnerships in enhancing and sustaining Vermont's environmental quality.

In addition to food rescue programs aimed at businesses, the Foodbank also runs a gleaning program in which volunteers harvest and gather excess produce, or seconds, from farms, enabling the Foodbank to provide delicious, healthy food to Vermonters who might not otherwise have access to local produce. The Foodbank works with its 225 network partners to connect them to local retailers to build their own food rescue programs.

"We are thrilled to have our work in food rescue recognized by the governor's office," said John Sayles, CEO of the Vermont Foodbank. "Through our food rescue programs, we are able to provide more food to neighbors in need while also strengthening the environment in Vermont. We hope these efforts only continue to grow."



IN THE NEWS -

Universal Recycling Law Brings More Food Than Expected to Hungry Vermonters

By MELODY BODETTE

First aired on VPR on December 28, 2015, and reprinted here with permission from VPR.

NOTE: Alex Bornstein is now the executive director of The Chill Foundation.



Vermont's universal recycling law, Act 148, requires institutions that create large amounts of food waste to keep that food out of a landfill. That new mandate has created an opportunity.

Much of this so-called waste is actually high-quality food that the Vermont Foodbank now redistributes to hungry Vermonters.

Surrounded by boxes of food in the warehouse at the Vermont Foodbank, Chief Operations Officer Alex Bornstein says the numbers this year have been remarkable.

"Food rescue is up 30 percent year-to-date. Our network partner pick-ups from retail establishments are up 209 percent. Our overall waste is down 56 percent. Under half a percent of what we bring in here goes to waste, which is generally pig food or compost, it doesn't go into landfill," he said. "Our pounds distributed overall in Vermont through all of our locations are up 25 percent this year."

Through food rescue, partner agencies, like local food shelves, pick up unwanted food from neighborhood grocery stores to distribute. Food companies and farmers also give donations of food when there's a labeling mistake or if the produce isn't the right size for the wholesale market.

Holding up an undersized head of cabbage, Bornstein said, "Because these heads are so small, people were picking them up and looking at them. We had to say, 'It's cabbage.'"

Bornstein says the Vermont Foodbank also gets bigger shipments of shelf-stable food from grocery store warehouses.

"When we bring in product that is raw salvage, it comes from Hannaford in Maine, it comes from CVS, it comes from all of these different areas. It all comes into here and we have to sort through every single box," he said. "We have to be sure that the quality is acceptable, that there's nothing wrong with it. That it's within the dates that are acceptable."

On a recent day, a group of volunteers, some wearing holiday sweaters, are doing the sorting. "They're going through every single banana box. The foodbanking world runs on banana boxes," Bornstein said.

Instead of bananas, the stacks of sturdy boxes contain an assortment of packaged products found in any grocery store.

“They’re opening every box, they’re checking every single product. This group, in three to four hours, will go through thousands of products. And then they’re re-boxing them according to different categories. You can see sorted cereals, you can see desserts, and once we get some pallets full, we’ll weigh them and wrap them up,” he said.

Before the universal recycling law, 60,000 tons of food was thrown away annually. Thirty to 40 percent of that was estimated to be edible, according to the Agency of Natural Resources.

In the past, much of this food would have been destined for the landfill. Now it will be sent to a local food shelf.

The Agency of Natural Resources estimates that before the universal recycling law, 60,000 tons of food was thrown away annually. Thirty to 40 percent of that was estimated to be edible. Still, environmental analyst Bryn Oakleaf says the increase in donations of food has been surprising.

“Even our own systems analysis was estimating just an uptick of a couple tons a year. But close to 100 tons with the year to date is really fantastic,” she said.

Oakleaf says after waste reduction, the state places a priority on getting food to people instead of sending it to a landfill.

“The more that we are capturing the quality food for consumption at the upstream end through our available networks versus looking at a dozen composter, and we’re piloting anaerobic digestion projects around the state. It definitely plays a big role in how much downstream infrastructure we need,” she said.

The Foodbank’s Bornstein says other anti-hunger organizations are calling for information about the food rescue program. He says while it’s a challenge to attribute the entire 30 percent increase in food rescue directly to the universal recycling law, the conversation around it is valuable.

“Vermont is being sought out for data for what we’re seeing, how the partnerships are rolling out,” Oakleaf added.

Bornstein says food rescue is one way to supplement all of the other ways they bring food to the people the organization serves. The Vermont Foodbank distributed 10 million pounds of food last year, and is on track to increase that amount to 11 million this year.



“Food rescue is up 30 percent year-to-date. Our network partner pick-ups from retail establishments are up 209 percent. Our overall waste is down 56 percent. Under half a percent of what we bring in here goes to waste...”

Upcoming Events

Harpoon Point to Point Saturday, August 13, 2016



It's almost here! This year's Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group is going to be the best yet. Don't miss out on the highlight of the summer.

This year's ride will feature a brand-new 20-mile mountain bike ride at Mt. Ascutney. Sign up for that, or try your legs at 100, 50, or 25 miles on the road. You just can't beat the camaraderie of this great event!

Celebrate with your fellow riders over a pint of Harpoon's finest at the post-ride party. No one throws a party like Harpoon, so you can count on some tasty BBQ and great live music.

And it gets even better. Since its inception, this event has raised over a million dollars for the Vermont Foodbank. We can't wait to see what this year brings.

To learn more, sign up to ride, or volunteer, visit:
www.harpoonpointtopoint.com

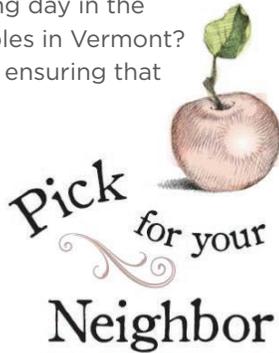
Pick for your Neighbor September 1 to October 31, 2016

What's better than spending a fulfilling day in the crisp autumn air picking the best apples in Vermont? Picking some for your neighbors too, ensuring that everyone can savor the harvest.

This apple season, visit a local participating orchard to pick and purchase extra apples for donation to the Vermont Foodbank. We will distribute your apples throughout Vermont to our neighbors in need.

This is a fantastic opportunity for individuals, groups, and companies to celebrate fall by helping the Foodbank distribute more fresh produce than ever, while supporting our local orchards.

Learn more here: www.vtfoodbank.org/PFYN.



Mark your calendar: September Is Hunger Action Month

September



Hunger Action Month is a nationwide campaign to bring awareness to the issue of hunger and give people like you a way to take action.

This year, the iconic symbol of the empty plate will represent and drive awareness of what happens when stomachs are empty.

From social media activation to events and volunteer opportunities, there will be something for everyone!

Find everything you need to know about how to get involved this September at www.vtfoodbank.org/HAM.

Oktoberfest 5 Saturday, October 8, 2016



Magic Hat Brewery is hosting its annual fall festival, Oktoberfest 5, to benefit the Vermont Foodbank.

This unique celebration brings together a variety of Vermont food purveyors who will be providing samples of and selling their scrumptious creations. The event will also feature live music and an outdoor beer garden serving fresh Magic Hat brews.

To date, this event has raised more than \$30,000 for the Vermont Foodbank. Be a part of the magic this year. Join us on Saturday, October 8, 2016, from noon to 5 p.m. at the Artifactory in South Burlington.

To see photos and learn more about the event, visit www.magichat.net/artifactoryevents.

For all the latest information, visit our website at www.vtfoodbank.org

We're very social! Join us on:



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