

Kernels

Your help means that families can access nutritious foods — when and where they need it most.

This spring we bring you stories about all the good your gift is doing for children, families, and seniors in Vermont.

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE**
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A Note from
the CEO
p. 2

A Vermont Family
Overcomes
Difficult Times
p. 4

Help is There
for a Family
in Need
p. 6

Summer
Hunger
p. 8

 Vermont Foodbank

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Feeding a Family

You have helped so many families in Vermont, and for that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Families and food. There really isn't a stronger connection out there. We all have a human imperative to feed our families. The thought of any child going hungry is heart-wrenching. The consequences for health and brain development affect the whole community for a lifetime.

As you'll read in Candace's story, and perhaps as you've experienced yourself, adding the need to care for elderly parents can cause families to make trade-offs that have real consequences. In Vermont, a family's choices about what's for dinner (and breakfast and lunch) are mostly financial choices. There is plenty of food available; it's the ability to pay for that food and the endless trade-offs that result in hunger. Families like Candace's are forced to make difficult choices about the basics — food, shelter, medical care, transportation.

As always, thank you for helping to keep families in Vermont happy and healthy. Because of you, Vermont is a better place today for someone in need.

Thank you!


John Sayles, CEO





Candace is a mother, a daughter, and a wife in Rutland County, Vermont.

She is caring for her aging parents every day, and thanks to you, she is able to provide her children with the food they need to grow. This is her family's story.

My parents worked their entire lives, but through no fault of their own they've been left with only a small, fixed income. Consequently, it's fallen on my family to help provide for them. My husband works full time, but with seven mouths to feed now it's barely enough to get by.

When your loved ones need you, you can either turn away or choose to help. My name is Candy, and I chose to help.

Currently, I live with and take care of my aging parents. I am actually married with three children — ages 13, 14 and 18 — but **my parents require 24-hour care**, so I stay with them while the rest of my family lives next door.

A few years ago, my father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. It's gotten to the point where he no longer remembers anyone and can't do anything for himself. My mother's health is failing as well. She doesn't have the ability to care for him, so the responsibility is on me.

We've often had to choose between buying food and medicine, and sometimes, my husband and I skip meals altogether so my parents can eat.

That's why, **when I discovered the food pantry in our town, I was truly relieved.** With their help, I no longer have to worry about where our next meal is coming from. These past few years have been some of the most difficult of my life — but having the pantry to turn to is helping me get through. **In the midst of my stress, I can relax better at night knowing that my family will have breakfast in the morning.** The food pantry's help is a blessing that someday, I hope to be able to pay forward.

Your help means that families like Candace's had access to nutritious foods — meat, fruits, vegetables and other essential ingredients — when and where they needed it most.

You can learn more about Candace and her family in a short video by visiting:
www.vtfoodbank.org/candace.

Kernels

A Vermont family overcomes challenges to provide *hope* for the next generation

Because of the fresh produce events you support, Patty and Mark's children can access fresh, healthy food at their school to bring home to share with their family.

Patty lives in Barre with her husband, Mark, and their children. For years, both Patty and Mark worked long hours as LNAs to make ends meet. But once they had children, two of whom are autistic, it became impossible for them both to work those long hours. Since then, things have been challenging for their family.

Patty and Mark's income and monthly 3SquaresVT (known as SNAP nationally, and formerly called food stamps) benefits are not enough to afford the healthy food they need to raise growing children. They struggle to pay their rent and their bills, and often are forced to make difficult choices in order to feed their family.

Patty, who has worked as a food services coordinator at a homeless shelter, is familiar with the need in her community. "There is so much judgment towards people who need help, but they are all struggling with real challenges and doing their best, just like my family and I are."

That judgment makes everything harder to navigate. Patty doesn't like to use her 3SquaresVT benefits because she is embarrassed. When grocery shopping, she often fills up the cart but makes her husband go through the checkout line. "This is how judgment hurts," she says. Patty wants a better life for her children, one where their needs are met and they do not feel shame for doing the best that they can.



You helped kids access fresh fruits and vegetables in a judgment-free environment so they can grow up to be healthy and strong.

Thank you!



continued...

At their elementary school, Patty's son and daughter are able to go "shopping" at the Vermont Foodbank's VeggieVanGo produce events. Along with their fellow students, they select free fresh fruits and vegetables while enjoying samples of the healthy food. "Not only is this helping with hunger, but it is also teaching life skills to our children. They bring the food home and are so proud to be able to provide food for our family," says Patty.

"It brings people together — students, parents, teachers, bus drivers — and teaches children not to be ashamed," she continues. "It feels like it's all okay. All the kids can take a bag of apples. It isn't just you." Patty's family especially enjoys the eggs, produce, and the healthy food they bring home from these events.

As Patty looks to the future, she just wants her kids to have the best lives possible. And things are looking up. Mark was able to find a good job and was recently promoted to store manager. They both hope that this will lead to a new chapter for their family.

While they are working toward this goal, your support is making the difference and ensuring that Patty, Mark, and their children have healthy food today so that they can plan for a better tomorrow.

Are you interested in leaving a gift in your will?

Over the years, many donors have informed us of their intention to include a gift to the Vermont Foodbank in their wills. Solving hunger takes generations. You can join these supporters and make sure help is always there by including the Foodbank in your will or estate plan.

For more information, contact Allison Mindel at (802) 477-4108 or amindel@vtfoodbank.org.



A family faces difficult times and emerges *stronger*

Ortilia and Tyrone have had to make tough decisions when it comes to paying the bills or buying groceries. With an illness in the family, a job lost after a workplace injury, and three growing children to feed, they found themselves in need of help they never expected. Thanks to people like you, they were able to get help. This is their story.

“I never thought food pantries were for people like us. My husband, Tyrone, and I are both educated and have always supported ourselves. I thought food pantries were for homeless people or people who did not/could not work. That’s why, when our struggles began, I didn’t consider going to one for help. But then I saw a flyer at our church. I went, and quickly realized I had been wrong. Food pantries are for people like us – they are resources for anyone who finds themselves in need of extra support.”

Our downhill slide began when Tyrone lost his job after getting hurt at work. I was in school at the time and getting ready to finish, but soon after I got really sick. I couldn’t work or go to school, and my family entered a dark time in our lives. **Each month, we had to choose between paying the light bill and buying**



Because of you, families going through tough times don't have to go without food.

Thank you!





Produce like this at NEKCA's food shelf in St. Johnsbury is available to Vermonters in every county because of you.



food. We were plagued by the stress of not having enough money to buy groceries. And there were plenty of times where we skipped meals so that our children — who are now teens — always had enough to eat.

I am so grateful we discovered the food pantry. The food and care it provided helped us slowly dig our way out from under. The nutritious staples helped me recover from my illness, and helped my children stay strong and healthy throughout our struggle. **We haven't recovered 100 percent yet — we still turn to the pantry to supplement our**

groceries from time to time — but we're close. Tyrone has a full-time job now and I'm working part time along with volunteering at the pantry. I'm hoping to work full time as soon as my health fully allows.

As for our children, they are doing really well. Together we've created plans for each of them — to finish college and have a great career. Hopefully the struggles we've gone through will help them overcome any challenges the future may bring; and help them emerge from those challenges like our family has now — stronger and closer, with a heart to help others in need.

*Stories like this are true for families in our state and across the country. **Because of your help, families like Ortilia's are able to stay strong and healthy through difficult times. Thank you!***



Without school meals, kids will skip meals this summer. You can help provide healthy food so families can eat.

\$50 can feed a family for a week this summer.

Place your gift in the enclosed envelope to make a difference today.

The Forecast: Summer can be tough on kids and families.

School's almost out. And the truth is, not every kid is looking forward to it. The free meals that kids rely on during the school year are about to take a 10-week break as schools close their doors. Kids are facing a season of hunger.

Summer is supposed to be a time when kids can just be kids. It's a time to climb trees, ride a bicycle for the first time, and swim in the nearby pond. It's when we get to eat our summer favorites: watermelon, corn on the cob, and smoky barbecue.

Summer is a season of plenty, right?

Not for everyone. Without the help of school lunch programs, thousands of children in Vermont will have to skip meals this summer.

But here's the thing... there can be enough for everyone. Families can get through the summer with help from you. They will rely on fresh fruits, vegetables, and pantry favorites provided by the food deliveries and programs you make possible.

We, at the Vermont Foodbank, will keep speaking up for kids and families because kids should never go hungry. You can help make summer better for kids by making a gift today. It costs just \$50 to feed a family for a week during the summer.

Gather. Share. Nurture.