You’re making sure that people in every community in Vermont can enjoy a holiday meal.
It’s impossible to predict what will be happening as you read this, and what Thanksgiving will look like this year. COVID-19 has scrambled everything and this Thanksgiving will be unlike any we’ve experienced before. Many gatherings will be smaller, and fewer people will be able to travel to be with loved ones. For those of us who have lost family or friends, seen our jobs disappear, or had to close our businesses, hearts are broken and there is fear and uncertainty about what will happen next.

We all need a ray of hope, a morsel of joy. As a part of the Vermont Foodbank family, you are providing that, and more. It feels good to give, to volunteer, to get involved. These are tangible acts, and your generosity means that tens of thousands of people impacted by COVID-19 have food available. The local food shelf is still open. Food is set into a car with a smile and kind words at the local school, hospital, or other community site. Neighbors are caring for each other.

The generosity that has powered this effort is truly humbling, and I know it will continue as long as the need persists. Thank you for being there for your neighbors during this difficult time.

Thank You!

John Sayles
CEO
Neighbors helping neighbors this holiday season

Homeless and working odd jobs, Tom was expecting to spend this Thanksgiving without a solid meal. Thanks to the care and support of friends like Mary, and you, he’ll be able to celebrate with a full plate.

About seven years ago, Tom was going door-to-door, asking if people needed their lawn cut. He was struggling to make ends meet and so far, he wasn’t having much luck cutting lawns. But when he knocked on Mary’s door, his luck started to change and a new friendship was born.

“Mary is an absolute saint,” Tom says.

And while Mary wouldn’t call herself a saint, she gives back whenever she can. “I was thinking about being a nun when I was younger,” Mary admits. “I just want to help people through tough times.”

Since they met seven years ago, Tom has run into tough times. He’s been homeless lately and while he’s been taking odd jobs, finding food is difficult. But Mary has been there for him.

“I’ve opened my house up to him …” Mary says. “Sometimes people just need a little help.”

This holiday season, Mary is making sure Tom has a nourishing Thanksgiving meal. But she can’t do that alone. Now living on a fixed income, Mary can’t afford a turkey. So she visited a food distribution. In addition to a turkey, she was able to get stuffing, gravy, and other holiday sides.

“I want people to have the food they need during the holidays,” Mary says. “I just need a little help getting them there. I’m thankful for it.”

And so is Tom, who said if it weren’t for Mary and the turkey, he would be spending Thanksgiving without a solid meal.

“Turkey to me means eating good this holiday,” Tom says. “It’s hearty soul food. It’s turkey stew, it’s warmth.”

Thank you for the care you’ve shown for your community through tough times.
“I talked to some people … because they saw me walking home and they were like, ‘The food you make is really good, thank you for making us dinner and we really appreciate it.’ It was really sweet of them,” Amanda says. “I went back and I told Chef Joey that it made me feel really good, and when I go to bed it makes me feel like I put into the world and I did some good.”

As a recent graduate of the Community Kitchen Academy (CKA) — a culinary job training program run in partnership with Capstone Community Action in Barre and Feeding Chittenden in Burlington — Amanda says this type of praise wasn’t a unique experience for her. Throughout the program, the ability to give back to her community by preparing food, such as Coconut Chicken Stir Fry, for her neighbors facing hunger made Amanda feel good. So good, in fact, she’s continuing to work in the kitchen with program instructor, Chef Joey, preparing meals for the food shelf while she looks for a position in a local restaurant.

After getting, as she puts it, “mixed up in the wrong lifestyle,” Amanda learned about Capstone Community Action and CKA. It’s always been a dream of hers to cook and eventually run her own food truck, so the culinary training program was a good fit and a great opportunity to take her life in a new direction. Amanda applied, was accepted, and started classes earlier this year. Then COVID-19 hit and the pause button was pressed on in-person learning. But thanks to a quick pivot from Chef Joey, classes resumed remotely, with students completing online work and cooking projects at home and then reporting back in to Chef Joey.

The experience shifted back to on-site learning over the summer, when Capstone Community Action took on a contract to feed people facing homelessness staying in motels around Washington County. According to Chef Joey, the class became a mass-production kitchen in which she and her students cranked out 200 dinners and 150 breakfasts each day.
“I really liked [preparing meals] for the homeless,” Amanda says. “It made me feel good at night, kind of like to feed the homeless people, to have a purpose ... to do something good for somebody.”

Amanda shares that having been homeless, she’s experienced not having enough to eat, and she’s grateful to have the opportunity to learn and to help others at the same time.

“Ever since then I just really wanted to be able to give something back to people,” Amanda explains. “Ever since I had to go through that and experience being homeless and being in a tough spot, because no one wants to be there, no one wants to feel that, and on top of that, no one wants to not have something to eat. Because it’s really tough. It was a really good experience being in CKA. It taught me a lot.”

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**Coconut Chicken Stir Fry**

*makes 6 servings*

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup sesame oil
- 4 lbs boneless chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 large white onion, thinly sliced
- 2 ribs celery, thinly sliced
- 3 large carrots, thinly sliced in half moon shapes
- 6 scallions, sliced on a bias
- Mushrooms, sliced
- 1 large red bell pepper, thinly sliced into strips
- ¼ head green cabbage, thinly sliced
- 1 cup soy sauce or tamari
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 small can pineapple juice
- ½ cup sweet Thai chili sauce
- 2 tbsp crushed red pepper
- 2 tbsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tbsp garam masala or curry powder
- 1 can coconut milk
- ½ cup toasted coconut flakes
- Rice or noodles for serving

**Instructions**

In a large skillet heat sesame oil until it starts moving around and crackling. Add the chicken. It will make noise — that is a good thing! When chicken starts to brown, add onions, celery, carrots, and mushrooms. Sauté until veggies start to cook. Add peppers, scallions, and cabbage. Move the pan around and stir fry it! Add all spices, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, Thai chili sauce, and pineapple juice. Let simmer for 5 minutes while stir frying constantly. Turn heat off. Add coconut milk and stir. Serve over rice, rice noodles, soba, or whatever you like!

**Optional**

Add a few extra chopped scallions, and toasted coconut for garnish.
Because of your help, partner food access center Feeding Chittenden welcomed visitors to a festive and bustling holiday scene last year. Things look different this year because of the pandemic, but your support continues to make the holidays special for neighbors in need.

It was cold in Burlington on the morning of November 25, 2019, one of those typical fall days when you can see the steam rise from frosted windshields and blades of grass as the sun works to burn off the cold. It is Vermont, though, and daily life doesn’t grind to a halt when the temperature drops. Nowhere was this more clear than along North Winooski Avenue that morning.

With just three days to go before Thanksgiving, a steady stream of car and foot traffic entered and exited the Feeding Chittenden parking lot. Thanks to your support, people facing hunger last year could turn to the Burlington-based food access center for a holiday meal with all the trimmings.

“I’m looking for onions and gravy right now, everything else is all set,” said one visitor, moving aside to let others pass.

“Not everybody has the available means,” they said, noting that they know many people who visit the food access center. “Food stamps help, but that only goes so far, and even that’s a good resource, but you know, you always need something different, because you know people have families, kids.”

Just inside the door, a line grew at the check-in where staff and volunteers guided people into the market area. Shoppers picked up fresh bread, stuffing mix, canned and fresh vegetables, and many of the other ingredients needed for the side dishes and staples that are features of the holiday for many. Even the smell of Thanksgiving was present, courtesy of the Community Kitchen Academy students working in the back to prepare holiday meals. Stockpots simmering with broth bubbled away while turkeys were prepped for roasting, all while visitors browsed the shelves and

Thank you for making the holidays special

Thanks to your help, the shelves are stocked at food shelves throughout the state.
refrigerators piecing together the ingredients for their holiday meals.

“So we know from statistics that more people are accessing food shelves,” one of Feeding Chittenden’s volunteers said that day. People served, he said, come from all walks of life, and he too relied on Feeding Chittenden to have enough food. “I get a grocery every now and then when I need to. If I have enough money I don’t, but I’ve been going through a period of not having a job so I’ve been needing to use the food shelf more.”

Thanks to your past support, visitors to Feeding Chittenden and food shelves throughout Vermont were able to have a holiday meal with all the trimmings last year. This year, things have changed drastically, forcing food shelves and meal sites to find new ways to make sure everyone has access to the food they need. Despite the changes brought about by COVID-19, your help continues to make an incredible difference.

As a Feeding Chittenden visitor noted last year while getting into line to check in, “It’s an invaluable service. If it wasn’t here, I couldn’t imagine what some people would be doing, you know what I mean?”

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.

Request your informational brochure today by contacting Allison Mindel at (802) 477-4108 or amindel@vtfoodbank.org.
A Holiday Feast for us all

Give the perfect gift

Instead of presents, consider making a donation in honor of a friend, family member, or colleague. For every $35 you donate, we’ll send you this special edition holiday card so you can let them know.

This year’s card art, titled “Cold Hollow,” was donated by Vermont artist Loré Pemberton.

All proceeds from this holiday card benefit the Vermont Foodbank and help provide food to friends and neighbors who are struggling with hunger.

Your Name: ____________________________
Address: _____________________________________________
City: __________________ State: ___________ Zip: ___________
Phone Number: (_____)________________ E-mail: _______________________
Amount Enclosed $__________ Please enclose a minimum gift of $35 per card

Charge my (check one): ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover
Card Number: ___________________ Expiration Date: _______ CVV Code: _____
Signature: __________________________

Order online at vtfoodbank.org/holidaycards or mail this completed form to:
Vermont Foodbank, Attn: Holiday Card, 33 Parker Road, Barre, VT 05641

PLEASE NOTE: To ensure that your holiday gift card arrives to you before December 25, please mail your form to us by December 10.

Thank you for giving the gift of meals to Vermont families this holiday season.