All of us at your Vermont Foodbank are truly humbled by the overwhelming support you have shown this year. The pandemic has disrupted lives, and the job losses and economic disruptions have created a crisis not felt in my lifetime. Our neighbors are showing impressive resilience in the face of this unprecedented crisis, reaching out for resources to make sure there is nourishing food on the table.

It is because of you that the Vermont Foodbank has been able to respond robustly from the very beginning. And because of your help, people will have a place to turn for food throughout 2021 and beyond. As you look at the numbers and read the stories of impact in this edition of Kernels, I hope you’ll see your mark on every bit of it. This would not be possible without you.

No one wants to feel like they’re digging out of a hole, and together we’re supporting the opportunity for people to bounce back, not dig out, knowing that a caring community stands by, ready to act.

Thank You!

John Sayles
CEO
This summer our family was forced to go down to one income so that the other parent would be home full-time with our two young children when the pandemic closed daycare, summer camp, and school wasn’t going to be functioning in a traditional model. This decision, although vital for the safety of our children, created a huge financial hole. My husband and I had to make ongoing difficult choices about how to spend our limited funds. Unbeknownst to our children, we began to skip meals to make what food we did have stretch further.

The irony of my situation is that I went from developing affordable housing to financially qualifying to live in it. I went from volunteering with the Vermont Foodbank to utilizing their programs.

Last year, you helped share nearly 15 million servings of fresh fruits and vegetables. Of that, more than 3 million servings were grown right here in Vermont.

You are providing fresh ingredients for a family to cook together

When the pandemic hit, this family from Brandon, VT, had to go down to one income to accommodate the changing realities of childcare. This brought with it difficult choices and a stretched food budget. But with the help of Foodbank programs that you make possible, they can access the fresh food they need to make delicious family meals together.
Because of the pandemic, so many people are facing hunger every single day. As need increased sharply this past year, we were able to support partners across the state providing food in ways that kept people safe and, in some cases, kept people home — thanks to your generosity.

Community has always been at the heart of feeding people, but if there’s one thing the pandemic has taught us all, it’s that none of us is an island. We depend on each other. This past year, we felt that truth more than ever as Vermont Foodbank front line workers and our statewide network of food shelves, meal sites, and community partners adapted everything we do so that people in Vermont had access to nourishing food no matter what they are going through.

By working together, older adults and neighbors with vulnerable immune systems were able to receive home deliveries of food.

Here is one such story, as told by Feeding Chittenden, a partner who provides home deliveries:

Debbie has moved around a lot in her life. She spent several years homeless in Burlington, sleeping in various shelters and communal living situations. Even when she was homeless herself, Debbie was there for others. She’d listen to people’s problems, and she’d share what little money she had to buy food for others. Debbie especially loves to cook for people, everything from cakes to steak to shepherd’s pie. She explains, “I love to help people. That is what God put me on this earth for. Not to hurt people. You have to give, give, give, whether they reciprocate or not. It doesn’t matter. You still have to help people, and I’ve done it all my life.”

But now, Debbie can’t get around the way she used to. She was recently...
A Feeding Chittenden volunteer loads turkeys into her car to make home deliveries to neighbors in need, with your help.

diagnosed with lung cancer, and she also lost some mobility due to a car crash and blindness in her right eye. With the pandemic and Debbie’s health conditions, leaving her apartment is riskier than ever.

Debbie says that she wants more than anything to be “independent.” Thanks to community members like you and to Feeding Chittenden’s home deliveries, Debbie can still receive fresh groceries and cook for herself in her own apartment.

You make it all happen!
More than 300 community partners, 25,400 donors, and 1000 volunteers took a stand against hunger this year and made all of this possible.
services. I went from taking for granted being able to pick up a prescription at the pharmacy to being uninsured.

Being able to access food at VeggieVanGo (a fresh food distribution) has allowed our family to include fruits and vegetables in our meals, a growing luxury with our reduced income rather than the staple it used to be. Our family was also so grateful for the addition of eggs, dairy, and other protein-rich offerings at the distributions. Our daughter wanted to be sure that I shared that she likes her “dippy eggs” (AKA over-easy eggs). Our son wanted me to share that he appreciates being able to have cottage cheese or yogurt as an option for his afterschool snack rather than just crackers. My husband and I want to share that the protein allows us to make meals that we wouldn’t normally be able to eat. For example, when eggs are available we add scrambled eggs to fried rice making it healthier and more filling.

The breakfast plate pictured included scrambled eggs, Cabot Vanilla Bean Greek yogurt (our family favorite) and homemade crepes with apple filling, all made with ingredients from Vermont Foodbank programs. The kids helped prep the apples and really enjoyed seeing them transform from a round red apple to sweet deliciousness. It was quite entertaining to watch their initial confusion about the differences between a crepe and a pancake.

I baked the muffin pictured with eggs and milk that I was able to get from Vermont Foodbank food distributions. These amazing muffins are a huge hit in our home! My daughter has even asked for them in place of cupcakes for her quickly approaching birthday.

Baking is my place of peace. It is a way that I can give something that starts as nothing and is truly filled with love. Typically, I bake once a week for things to put in the kids’ lunch pail. In the last couple of months, I now get special requests from the kids as to what love-filled baked good they want for the week. Even better is that they now find their own way out into the kitchen to help with the baking rather than me begging them to come help. They too are taking pride in the amazingly delicious things that we create together.

Thank you to the Vermont Foodbank supporters that make this all possible!
The mission of the Vermont Foodbank is to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so that no one in Vermont will go hungry.
Rebuilding our communities

A year ago this month, we had no idea how much our daily lives were about to change. Since then, we’ve lost the simple pleasures of sharing a meal with friends and family, of browsing the aisles at the grocery store, of watching our kids play with other kids, of gathering with colleagues at the water cooler … and though these are the small moments we cling to, we all know we’ve lost so much more — jobs, homes, businesses, health, and people we love. At the Vermont Foodbank, we hear these stories every day.

Though widespread vaccinations are nearly in reach, the economic impacts of the pandemic are already rippling out far into the future. This begs the question, what will it mean to recover? Can we ever go back to normal? What even is normal?

Rebuilding our communities — coming back stronger, more vibrant, and more equitable than we were before — will require all of us to take action. We will have to work together in true partnership, as a community.

Here are a few ways to help now:

• **Volunteer or donate to your local food shelf or meal site.** You can find a list on our website at vtfoodbank.org.

• **Help advocate for state and federal policies that ensure all are fed.** Sign up for advocacy alerts at vtfoodbank.org/advocacy.

• **Consider providing steady, reliable support to neighbors in need** by becoming a Vermont Foodbank monthly donor.

Most importantly, if you find yourself in need of help feeding yourself and your family, please reach out or visit our website at vtfoodbank.org. We’re all in this together.