I am overflowing with gratitude for the past year. Yes, it has been one of trauma and crisis, with COVID and social and political upheaval. All this change is hard, and with so much going on at once, why so much gratitude? **Underneath the challenges, Vermont has come together in wondrous ways to care for each other.**

With tremendous help, your Foodbank and community partners have made unprecedented resources available to reach people and places that haven’t been possible in the past — all at a time of increased need. You’ll see in the financial report, included in this newsletter, that philanthropic contributions last year exceeded our expectations, including a special one-time $9 million gift from national philanthropist, MacKenzie Scott. The **collective impact of our community’s support through gifts of time, funds, and shared voices has made it possible to meet the urgent needs of neighbors across Vermont over this past year.**

The Foodbank is deploying resources thoughtfully over the next several years as the economy resets. We will be here every step of the way to serve each family’s personal recovery: making more nourishing food available statewide, supporting deep community resiliency, and testing new ideas — all while prioritizing increased access to food with equity and dignity at the center of this work.

**Thank you all for being on this journey together.** Vermont is learning the lessons of this crisis and growing stronger as a result.

**Thank you!**

John Sayles
CEO
Neighbours are cooking meals that are personally significant, with your help.

You are providing culturally meaningful food for a family to enjoy

As a full-time student with three young kids at home, Adega shares that it can be difficult to pay the bills. Thanks to a new Foodbank program that you help support, Adega can receive food boxes that provide her with ingredients to cook more Somali dishes for her family.

“With the bills, it’s really hard, you can’t even find a simple job lately. And with being a mother and being in school, my life is just so packed.”

her husband have a five-year-old, a three-year-old, and new baby born last spring.

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted many parts of daily life, and Adega shares that for her family, affording groceries and getting to the store has become more challenging. “You can’t carry your kids to the grocery store,” she says. “With the bills, it’s really hard, you can’t even find a simple job lately. And with being a mother and being in school, my life is just so packed.”

That’s why Adega is so appreciative of the food her family receives as part of a new Vermont program.
“My family appreciates you for the service you provide. I can never explain in words how much you have helped our little family.”

–A program participant who has been cooking recipes using fresh fruits and veggies

Last year, you helped share 17.6 million pounds of food with people facing hunger. Of that, a record 4.8 million pounds was fresh fruits and vegetables.

You helped make Vermont-grown food available to neighbors in need, and kept dollars in the local economy, by supporting purchases from more than 150 local farms this year.

“As farmers, we recognize that good food is vital to well-being. When we eat well, we flourish — we sleep better, we make better choices, we are wiser and kinder to ourselves and others. We can think of no better way to contribute to that than partnering with the Vermont Foodbank to help get good food to our community.”

–Michaela, New Village Farm
This past year, **729 dedicated volunteers** worked **7,570 hours** to help get more food out to neighbors who needed it — the equivalent of an **additional 3.75 full-time staff members**.

“Volunteering with the Vermont Foodbank is an opportunity to make a difference in a tangible way, knowing that what we harvest today will feed hungry Vermonters tomorrow.” —Patricia, a gleaning volunteer

Together, we recognized the power of collective impact and gave out **386 grants** to community organizations and partners who work to advance food access across the state. This totaled more than **$1.5 million**, deepening local impact and meeting urgent needs.

“Retreat Farm is on a mission to connect people to the land and to nourish our community. Funds will help us examine how to best leverage our existing land and agricultural resources as we continue to provide free and low-cost nutritious produce.”

—Retreat Farm

Your support enabled a quick response to increased hunger brought on by the pandemic; in total the Vermont Foodbank community hosted **266 food box distributions** and **172 fresh produce distributions** since March 2020.

“We got home and started opening boxes, and my wife was in tears. We haven’t had this much food in the cupboard for a while. (We ate our last can of tuna last night with some rice and lentils!) Now we have four more cans! We’re cooking and canning most of the fresh produce tomorrow so that it will last without going bad. You’re all changing lives with this. I hope you realize that.”

—Visitor to a food box distribution

“Volunteering with the Vermont Foodbank is an opportunity to make a difference in a tangible way, knowing that what we harvest today will feed hungry Vermonters tomorrow.” —Patricia, a gleaning volunteer
Foodbank partnership and program that supplies locally grown, culturally responsive food boxes to families struggling to access familiar foods. **Thanks to friends like you, the opportunity is there to try new methods of food distribution that recognize and support the diversity of neighbors’ needs across the state.**

Adega explains that while she has lived in Burlington for a long time, she was born in the refugee camps in Kenya. “I basically grew up over here, I came here when I was seven. My parents are from Somalia, both my parents. I was born in Kenya.”

“My mom and them, they like Somali food all the time,” she says. “I mix it up with American food and Somali food. ‘Cause I get bored of the same thing.”

**Adega receives her food box through The Family Room, a partner of the Foodbank, and says that she uses the culturally relevant vegetables to cook more Somali dishes at home.**

“Well first of all, you have different recipes and white rice goes with everything. You can make it with broccoli or veggies, or you can make it with meat. We like a lot of cow meat and goat meat … I like the fresh, ah, what do you call that? Cilantro and parsley and vegetables. The squash. You know Africans like squash nowadays. So we cook it, sometimes we fry it with other vegetables … Cilantro, you have to use it for everything, to be honest,” laughs Adega.

**It’s important to Adega’s family that they have access to both Somali and American food. And she likes to cook a variety of dishes for her kids.**

“They like it when we have taco nights or mac and cheese. Chicken night … Because, you know, at school they eat different food. When they come home it’s like, oh, I’m learning new things. Like I make white rice, I make regular rice, and I make, you know, chapati? Samosas. You know I do different things, every day’s a new recipe at my house.”

She laughs again, “I got picky eaters, so I gotta like, focus.”

And Adega loves that the food is organic and local. “I give some to my mom too, she loves it also.”

“It’s very, very helpful towards our family. My mom is not receiving assistance either, so it really helps her too, when I give her some. It’s good to share, sometimes that’s what I tell people. I tell my kids all the time it’s good to share, you know?”

**“Thank you for the food delivery,” says Adega. “I appreciate you guys for doing that. It’s really helping with the groceries and everything … It’s got me saving a lot honestly, with the bills and everything.”**

“I mean, my family’s great. We’re poor, but everything’s going great. I’m involved with my family and my kids are connecting. They’re going to school, they love school. Everything else is great, to be honest. ”
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.
Twenty-three months ago, daily routines across Vermont started changing — fast.

Kids were home from school, grocery store shelves were wiped out, and the Vermont Foodbank was scrambling to redesign food distribution to keep people safe and fed on a mass scale.

Now it’s nearly two years later, and we’re still living with the realities of coronavirus and the ways it has impacted our lives here in Vermont. One of the major impacts we’re still seeing — increased levels of hunger.

Many neighbors have experienced income disruption since the start of the pandemic. Winter months mean people are trying to balance the additional cost of heating. And food prices have been steadily rising across the nation due to supply chain breakdown, labor shortages, and high transportation costs.

Since the pandemic began, one in three people in Vermont has faced hunger. And more than half reported experiencing hunger for the first time.

But recent data also shows that our collective response has made a real difference. While food insecurity rates are still much higher than pre-COVID levels, they have dropped since March 2020. If there’s one thing that has come to light during this experience, it’s that we’re strongest together.

We know the path to a food-secure Vermont will take all of us — the Foodbank, community partners, the state of Vermont, the federal government, advocates, donors, and individuals.

Here are a few ways you can help support your community and get food to neighbors statewide:

• 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 loved ones, please reach out or visit our website at vtfoodbank.org. We’re all in this together.

Our community is strongest together.