

SPRING 2016

Gather. Share. Nurture.

Kernels



Vermont Foodbank
www.vtfoodbank.org

A member of
FEEDING AMERICA

Together We Can Solve Hunger™

This year, the Vermont Foodbank will serve as many as 34,000 children under the age of 18 who are struggling with hunger.

Through the Foodbank's Backpack Program, VeggieVanGo deliveries to schools, and a network of 225 food shelves and meal sites, the Vermont Foodbank is working to ensure that Vermont kids have the food they need, all year round.

The Vermont Foodbank knows that providing food to kids alone will not end hunger. That is why the Foodbank engages in advocacy and public policy discussions. We understand that public policies play an important role in preventing hunger and solving it when it exists. We work collaboratively with a number of organizations that hold similar values and complementary missions because we know that is what it takes to solve hunger.

In late March, the Vermont Foodbank joined 300 early childhood professionals, parents, employers, and policymakers in Montpelier for the 22nd annual Early Childhood Day at the Legislature. It was a great opportunity to connect with other people and organizations that are working on similar issues and have a vested interest in ensuring that Vermont kids have the resources they need to lead healthy, happy lives. The day started at the State House, where we engaged with legislators about issues of childhood hunger, affordable childcare, after-school and summer learning, and other priorities as set by the Early Childhood Alliance in its 2016 Legislative Agenda (learn more at vermontearlychildhoodalliance.org). As a member of the Alliance, the Vermont Foodbank is working to bring voice to many of the legislative priorities that affect the children and families we serve on a daily basis.

To learn more about how the Vermont Foodbank is working with lawmakers to ensure that no one in Vermont goes hungry, visit our website, vtfoodbank.org and sign up for our advocacy e-mails. We will keep you up-to-date on issues that are affecting those who are hungry and give you an opportunity to raise your voice in support of ending hunger in Vermont.





John riding on the Foodbank's first ever float for the Magic Hat Mardi Gras Parade. The Foodbank is the beneficiary of the event and led this year's parade with its Sing a Song of Sixpence themed float.

NOTE from the CEO

Vermont is truly a special place for children. Lots of places probably say that, but in Vermont we have the data to back it up. We are at the top of the list for children who are insured and receive the health care they need. We are one of the safest places to live. We are rightfully famous for our beautiful and accessible outdoors with clean water, clean air, and lots of open space. Our K-12 schools consistently perform in the top tier nationally. So what about childhood hunger? Where does Vermont stand? We have the 10th **lowest** level of childhood food insecurity in the country—at 19.2 percent. It may be lower than most, but to me that doesn't feel like anything to celebrate. It means that nearly **1 in 5 kids in Vermont don't have regular access to all the nutritious food they need to grow, learn, and play.**



Research clearly shows the impact on our children of not having enough of the right food—illness, poor behaviors, lower academic achievement, even changes in brain development. In this state of nearly 627,000 people, thousands of children are at risk. It seems like a number we can get our hands around, not just chip away at but take a big chunk out of, right? This issue of *Kernels* is all about what your Vermont Foodbank is doing to ensure that these kids—and their families—are getting the food they need

to live healthy and productive lives. There is the BackPack Program, confidentially providing food to 1,100 students every Friday during school, for the weekend. VeggieVanGo sets up a fresh market at a number of schools twice a month to make sure families have access to fruits and vegetables. We're signing families up for 3SquaresVT, so parents can have some extra buying power at the grocery store.

This is a complex challenge. Many smart minds in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are working to improve the lives of Vermont's children: The Permanent Fund's Let's Grow Kids, the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance, Hunger Free Vermont, and others. I recently had a conversation with National Life Group CEO Mehran Assadi, who is putting his very creative mind to this topic. Your Foodbank is in the mix, bringing our creative thinking and expertise in community change, food sourcing, and distribution to the table. The Foodbank makes our resources available to connect food-insecure Vermont kids to nutritious food whenever and wherever we can.

So as you read this issue of *Kernels*, focus on our kids and share any creative ideas you might have on how we can ensure that the children in this state have the food they need to reach their full potential. With the right start, the kids will do the rest. You can keep your Foodbank's, and our collective community's, great work going with a generous donation. It will make a difference in a child's life.

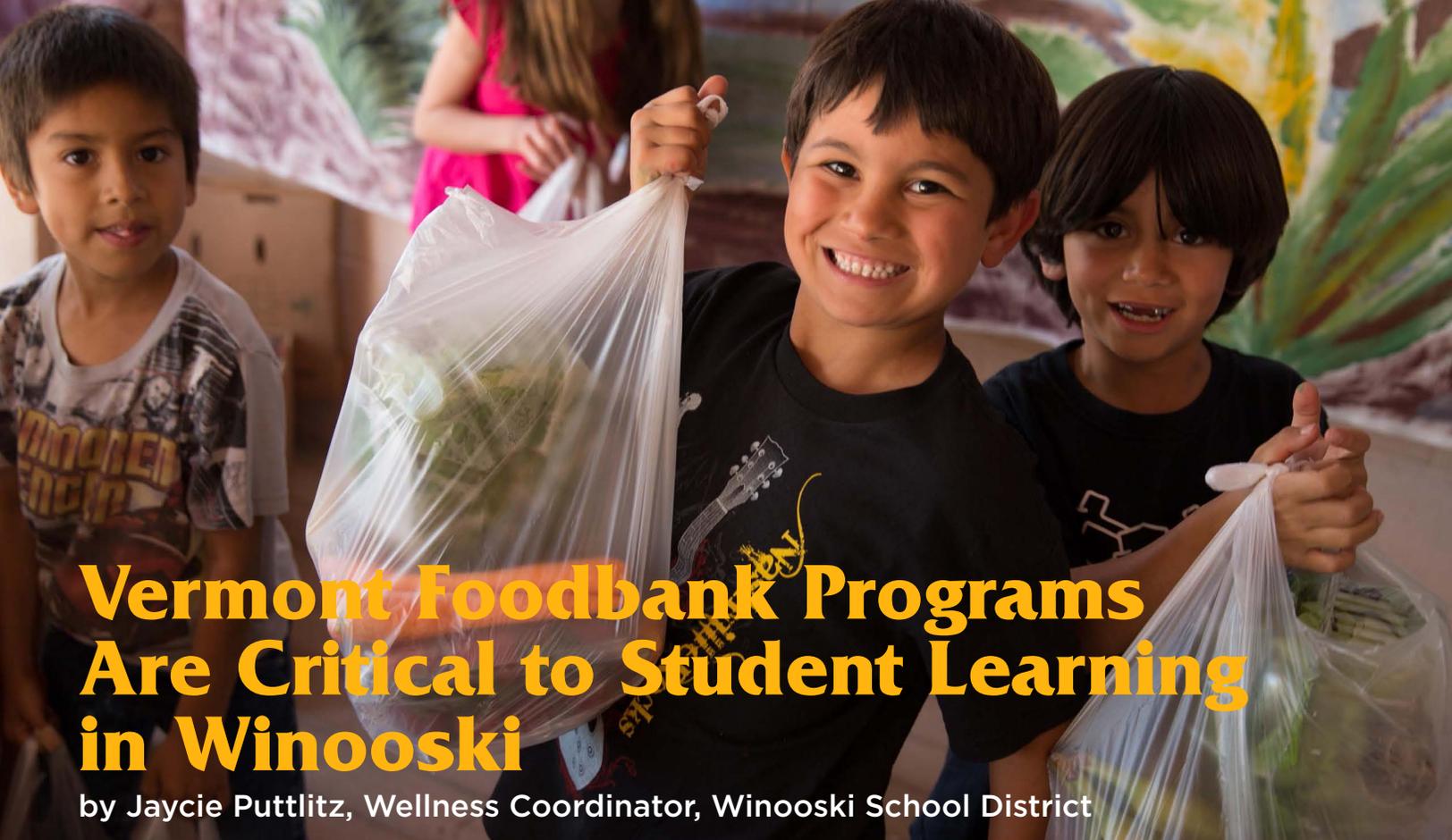
Thank you.


John Sayles, CEO



Vermont Foodbank

Gather. Share. Nurture.



Vermont Foodbank Programs Are Critical to Student Learning in Winooski

by Jaycie Puttlitz, Wellness Coordinator, Winooski School District

The Winooski School District (WSD) is one of the most economically and culturally diverse school districts in the state of Vermont. And with no safe paths to the nearest grocery store, located in the next town, the district is also situated in a “food desert”—an urban area where access to affordable or good-quality fresh food is difficult.

More than 75 percent of our students qualify for free or reduced price breakfast and lunch. This high rate qualifies WSD to provide universally free meals through the community eligibility provision (CEP). The CEP helps ensure that while students are in school, they have access to nutritious food and will not go hungry. In fact, our Breakfast After the Bell program in the elementary school reduced the number of health office visits immediately after implementation this year.

But what happens when our students go home? **Food insecurity and hunger are real concerns for many of our students.** The local food shelf is available only four times a month—

twice for dry goods and twice for produce. That is why the Winooski school community is fortunate to partner with the Vermont Foodbank to provide its students and their families with supplemental nutrition through programs such as VeggieVanGo and the Backpack Program.

Between September and February, the Vermont Foodbank distributed **46,429 pounds of produce** to Winooski families through the VeggieVanGo program. We often record over 300 people coming through the line for food, with numbers ranging between 275 and 350 during produce distribution. Additionally, between October and February, over 1,180 bags of nonperishable food items were provided to an average of 70 students each week through the Backpack Program.

Distribution for both of these programs occurs on a Friday, and these are days that are a highlight for many of our students. They often stop me in the hall and ask excitedly,

“Is the food truck here today?” or, “Did you put the food in my locker yet?” There has not been a Friday yet when at least one student hasn’t eagerly asked me about the food they will receive.

When we distribute the produce in the VeggieVanGo program, families are happy, smiling, thanking us, and talking about what they plan to do with the food for dinner that night. We were fortunate to also have a VT Fresh taste-testing station recently, in which students lined up to try anything from squash to turnips—and then came back for more! This also provided an opportunity for our families to learn how to cook vegetables they may not normally cook at home. Among the problems that occur with childhood hunger are headaches and lack of energy, causing students to be unable to focus or think about anything except their empty stomachs. These Vermont Foodbank programs are critical in helping us fight childhood hunger and allow our students to be ready and engaged in learning.



Program Highlight

Hunger 101: Bringing Hunger Education Into the Classroom

Hunger 101 is an educational program for elementary, middle, and high school students. Stand-alone lesson plans that consist of role-playing and discussions help students learn more about food insecurity and give them the chance to understand the many issues that create and perpetuate food insecurity in Vermont.

The curriculum, which comes in the form of a toolkit, is designed to be incorporated into components of a school's curriculum such as math, science, social studies, and English at the middle and high school levels. The information found in the toolkit provides educators with the activities and information they need to encourage deeper discussions in the classroom.

The Vermont Foodbank staff also works with educators to conduct discussions and activities within the classroom or at our headquarters in a sensitive and engaging manner.

One activity in the toolkit is the Hunger 101 Simulation. Through this guided simulation, students are given the opportunity to walk in the shoes of someone who is struggling with food insecurity. Students are given identity cards, budget sheets, and the amount of money they have to spend on food for themselves and their family, for the day. They have the option to use one or all of the following to acquire food: a food shelf, a quick mart, and a Department of Children & Families Office, where they can apply for 3SquaresVT benefits. After students work through the activity, teachers and Foodbank staff, if present, lead a discussion about what students observed and learned during the simulation.

The activity is a great way to instill empathy and awareness in students who may have inaccurate perceptions about people living with food insecurity and about the daily struggles of people living in poverty.

What kids have to say about Hunger 101

The Vermont Foodbank works to promote hunger awareness in a number of ways and is always eager to work with young people who are interested in the issues of hunger and poverty. Consider the following ways to use the Vermont Foodbank as a classroom or school resource:

- **The Foodbank welcomes student field trips.** Contact the Vermont Foodbank to arrange a guided tour for your students.
- **Foodbank staff is trained to lead discussions and simulations from the Hunger 101 curriculum.** Invite the Vermont Foodbank to be a guest speaker for a school assembly, food drive kickoff, or other special event.
- **The Foodbank compiles data and information on hunger and poverty in Vermont, every year.** Ask the Foodbank to provide your school or classroom with research and reports to support discussions about hunger in Vermont.



“It was inspiring to learn about the different organizations that exist and thrive solely to help others.”

- Cole



“I have decided to start volunteering at one of your food shelves a few days a week after school.”

- Lizzy



“I really enjoyed your activity because it put into perspective the different types of people that struggle to survive on a daily basis.”

- Caroline

MARCH 17, 2016 -

Two Breakfasts May Be Better Than None for School Kids

By TRACIE MCMILLAN

First aired on NPR, reprinted here with permission.



Students eat breakfast at the Blueberry Harvest School at Harrington Elementary School in Harrington, Maine.

When it comes to school breakfasts, two is better than none, says a new report released Thursday in the journal *Pediatric Obesity*.

Researchers tracked nearly 600 middle-school students from fifth to seventh grade, looking to see if students ate no breakfast; ate breakfast at home or school; or ate both—and whether that affected obesity rates. The result: Weight gain among students who ate “double-breakfast” was no different than that seen among all other students. Meanwhile, **the risk of obesity doubled among students who skipped breakfast or ate it inconsistently.**

“It seems it’s a bigger problem to have kids skipping breakfast than to have these kids eating two breakfasts,” says Marlene Schwartz of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity and one of the study’s authors.

“This study ... debunks an important misconception that school breakfast contributes to childhood obesity,” says Duke Storen from Share Our Strength, a national group that runs anti-hunger and nutrition programs for children.

While direct opposition to free school breakfast is unusual, says Storen, officials sometimes balk at implementing “alternative breakfast models” designed to encourage use of the program—such as offering breakfast in grab-and-go bags or in classrooms, rather than traditional sit-down meals in a cafeteria. That’s a concern, say hunger advocates, because while eligibility rules for free and reduced-price breakfast are the same as for lunch, only about half as many children get subsidized breakfast as receive lunch, according to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), an advocacy group.

Indeed, the study was inspired in part by real-world concerns that school breakfast programs might promote obesity, says Schwartz.

In 2012, the administration of New York City’s then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg opposed offering breakfast in classrooms instead of school cafeterias, arguing that the change would



exacerbate childhood obesity. A year later, an American Journal of Public Health study showed that, on average, kids eating two breakfasts in New York City schools consumed 95 more calories daily than did those eating one breakfast.

Researchers of the new study didn't examine why eating double breakfasts did not affect obesity, but skipping the meal did. But Schwartz has a few hypotheses. First, school breakfast is fairly healthful; "they weren't eating doughnuts or Denny's Grand Slam," she says.

Second, kids who skip breakfast—a habit that doubled in frequency between grades 5 and 7, according to the study—are likely to over-eat later in the day. And, of course, just the fact that growing adolescents often need a lot of food to grow means that they can eat more without necessarily gaining weight.

The study also draws a direct line between school breakfast and fighting childhood hunger, underscoring the idea that malnourishment and obesity in the U.S. are not so much opposites as two sides of the same coin.

"The latest figures show that **15 million children live in food insecure households**," says Heather Hardline-Grafton, a senior researcher at FRAC. "While obesity is a serious problem for many children in the United States, so, too, is food insecurity."

“The study also draws a direct line between school breakfast and fighting childhood hunger, underscoring the idea that malnourishment and obesity in the U.S. are not so much opposites as two sides of the same coin.”

Upcoming Events

Vermont Restaurant Week

April 22- May 1, 2016
Statewide

Seven Days and the Vermont Federal Credit Union are putting on another incredible week of delicious dining options to benefit the Vermont Foodbank. More than 115 restaurants will offer special, multi-course prix-fixe menus, and fun, foodie events will take place throughout the week.

A percentage of all proceeds from sponsorships and special event admissions will be donated to the Vermont Foodbank. The Vermont Community Foundation will be matching all donations from the event up to **\$5,000.**

Last year this event raised over \$20,000 for the Vermont Foodbank. Come out to a Restaurant Week event to help make this year even better. Learn more here: <http://www.vermontrestaurantweek.com>.

VERMONT FEDERAL
CREDIT UNION presents



APRIL 22-MAY 1

Harpoon Point to Point Saturday, August 13, 2016 Windsor, VT

Registration is officially open for this year's Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group. Whether choosing to tackle 100, 50, or 25 miles on the road, or the new 20-mile mountain bike ride at Ascutney, all riders will find beautiful, well-supported courses. The post-ride party at the Harpoon Brewery in Windsor is top notch with hot showers, delicious BBQ, live music, and fresh beer, straight from the source! Family and friends are welcome. Last year this event surpassed the million-dollar mark in fundraising for the Foodbank. Sign up today to help raise funds for Vermonters struggling with hunger!

Sign up to ride or volunteer at www.harpoonpointtopoint.com.



HARPOON
POINT to POINT
presented by National Life Group®

AUGUST 13, 2016
to benefit the Vermont Foodbank



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

We're very social! Join us on:



Gather. Share. Nurture.

CONTACT US:

Vermont Foodbank
33 Parker Road • Barre, VT 05641
Tel: 802-476-3341 / Fax: 802-476-0319