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Spotlight on Campus Hunger

By Sally Ingraham, 3SquaresVT Outreach Manager with the Vermont Foodbank

A college education can break the cycle of poverty, providing a pathway to the middle class and financial self-sufficiency. Our children learn from a young age that going to college holds the promise of a good job and hope for a bright future. For some, this rite of passage is a seamless step into adulthood, but for many, college is an ambitious dream that requires sacrifice and support.

Recently, a local state college student shared her story of food insecurity with me. As a first-generation college student, her decision to go to school was a difficult one; the process was overwhelming and a financial burden on her family. She decided that an off-campus apartment would be the most economical plan given the high cost of room and board on campus. The cost of tuition, housing, books, and food was more than she and her family could afford, so she relied on financial aid. As a full-time student, she carried a heavy course load and participated in a federal work-study position

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NOTE from the CEO

In Vermont, we have one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country, but we consistently underperform in getting those graduates all the way through college. I believe we have a responsibility to provide a strong foundation to help our young people reach their full potential. Allowing that potential to go unrealized is a gigantic missed opportunity for individuals, but more important, for our communities.

A college degree is one of the most important springboards to economic mobility, and college students who struggle financially are the ones our communities need to support the most. These are often young adults, and sometimes single parents, who grew up with multiple challenges but have shown the grit and resilience to persevere in an effort to build a better future. They are tomorrow's entrepreneurs who will start and grow businesses in Vermont, and the employees who will power the businesses that are here now and in the future.

The wages of Americans without any form of postsecondary education continue to decrease. Those with a 2 or 4-year college degree continue to earn more than those with only a high school diploma. In a *Current Issues in Economics and Finance* journal article entitled, "Do the Benefits of College Still Outweigh the Costs?", Jaison R. Abel and Richard Deitz analyze the economic return on a college degree. What their analysis revealed was not positive for those with only a high school diploma. "The return [on a college degree] has remained high in spite of rising tuition and falling earnings because the wages of those without a college degree have also been falling, keeping the college wage premium near an all-time high while reducing the opportunity cost of going to school."¹ The analysis goes on to reveal, "Despite entering the labor force at a later age, workers with a bachelor's degree on average earn well over \$1 million more than high school graduates during their working lives, while those with an associate's degree earn about \$325,000 more."²

It is critical to ensure all of our neighbors have access to the opportunities that a college education affords. Lack of money for food and housing while in college needs to be seen as a societal, not an individual, challenge if Vermont wants to reap the benefits of these students' energy and vision. Having an accessible source of nutritious food can mean the difference between quitting college and earning a degree that results in tens of thousands of dollars in future earnings and economic activity.

Your Vermont Foodbank is already taking action to address hunger on our college and university campuses, but we can do so much more with your help. Sally Ingraham, our 3SquaresVT outreach manager, visits campuses and engages students who may be eligible for food assistance but don't know it. Just the other day she worked with two Johnson State College students to submit applications for benefits that will alleviate some of their financial pressures. Sally is also helping to coordinate the establishment of



John and Vermont Foodbank staff, Nicole Whalen and Sally Ingraham, met with our senators' offices to discuss how we can work together to end hunger following the Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.

a more robust food shelf on some of the Vermont State College (VSC) campuses to provide students better access to the foods they need and want. Conversations have begun with VSC administrators and the Vermont Higher Education Council (representing public and private colleges and universities across the state) to better understand the scope of food insecurity on our campuses and coordinate a logical and effective response. Hunger on campus can be solved with a little time, effort, and focus.

While this is a community issue that calls for a community response, the change happens one person at a time. With a little support, a student can get a good job and raise children with aspirations to do the same: succeed in school, graduate from college, and live productive and happy lives in our great state. We are all better off for making the investment. These young women and men are our future. Financial support for your Vermont Foodbank makes that future a reality. Don't let this potential go to waste. Please give generously. Thank you.

With gratitude,

John Sayles, CEO

¹ Abel, Jaison R., and Richard Dietz. "Do the Benefits of College Still Outweigh the Costs?" Federal Reserve Bank of New York Current Issues in Economics and Finance, 2014.

² Ibid.



Spotlight on Campus Hunger

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that consumed up to 24 hours per week, to offset some of the costs of her studies. Still, she relied on her parents for financial support to access food. When one of her parents lost a job and the financial support became less reliable, she found herself struggling to afford enough groceries to get her through the month. Her grades began slipping, and showing up for class grew harder every day. She even considered dropping out.

Food insecurity among college students is drawing national attention as studies illuminate the unsettling reality on many campuses. A 2016 study, *Hunger on Campus*, surveyed 3,800 students at 34 community and four-year colleges across 12 states. The study found that 22 percent of students were experiencing very low levels of food security and that students who face hunger are more likely to also struggle with housing. The study also revealed that students were living in cars, on friends' couches, and even in campus hallways.

These experiences present a major barrier to academic success. They can lead to a lifelong struggle to focus,

perform academically, graduate, find employment, and repay college loans. For college students facing hunger, it is much more challenging to achieve the lives they hope their education will provide.

Food insecurity is a concern for many undergraduates throughout Vermont. Over the years, the definition of a traditional college student has been changing. We must look beyond the parent-supported high school graduate and acknowledge that many seeking higher education have vastly different stories. They may not have graduated from high school and may be navigating lives as single parents, returning veterans, or caretakers of ailing relatives.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is considered our nation's first line of defense against hunger. It is locally referred to as 3SquaresVT. This program assists some students, but because of complicated student rules, it is not an option for all. The Vermont Foodbank has been working around the state to help students apply for assistance and bring more awareness to this growing need. We are fortunate to partner on this complex issue with the Higher Education Council, University of Vermont, the Vermont State College community, and many other Vermont and national organizations. Together we must take action to ensure that all students in Vermont have the food they need to learn and succeed.

The Number Of Hungry And Homeless Students Rises Along With College Costs

Aired February 8, 2017, on National Public Radio's All Things Considered, reprinted here with permission.

There's no way to avoid it. As the cost of college grows, research shows that so does the number of hungry and homeless students at colleges and universities across the country.

Still, many say the problem is invisible to the public.

"It's invisible even to me and I'm looking," says Wick Sloan. He came to Bunker Hill Community College in Boston more than a decade ago to teach English full time. He says it felt like he quickly became a part-time social worker, too.

"When I first got here, I was always told that we should never miss a chance to give students food," he says. "I foolishly thought at the time they meant Doritos and cookies. It's protein that they're after. It's crazy."

Bunker Hill is home to one of 25 food assistance programs on Massachusetts' public college campuses. That leaves just four public campuses across the state without one.

One first-year student at Bunker Hill, whose name we aren't using to protect her safety and privacy, was living in a shelter in Boston last summer when she first decided she wanted to enroll in classes here.

But she says that shelter didn't feel safe. "If I wanted to get good grades, if I wanted to get a good education, I needed to be at a slightly safer shelter," she says.

She was put on a long waiting list for a bed at a youth home and finally got in after six months. That's when she enrolled at Bunker Hill.

Now she's majoring in math.

"I knew that I really loved learning, but I wasn't sure if I was going to fit into the education system."

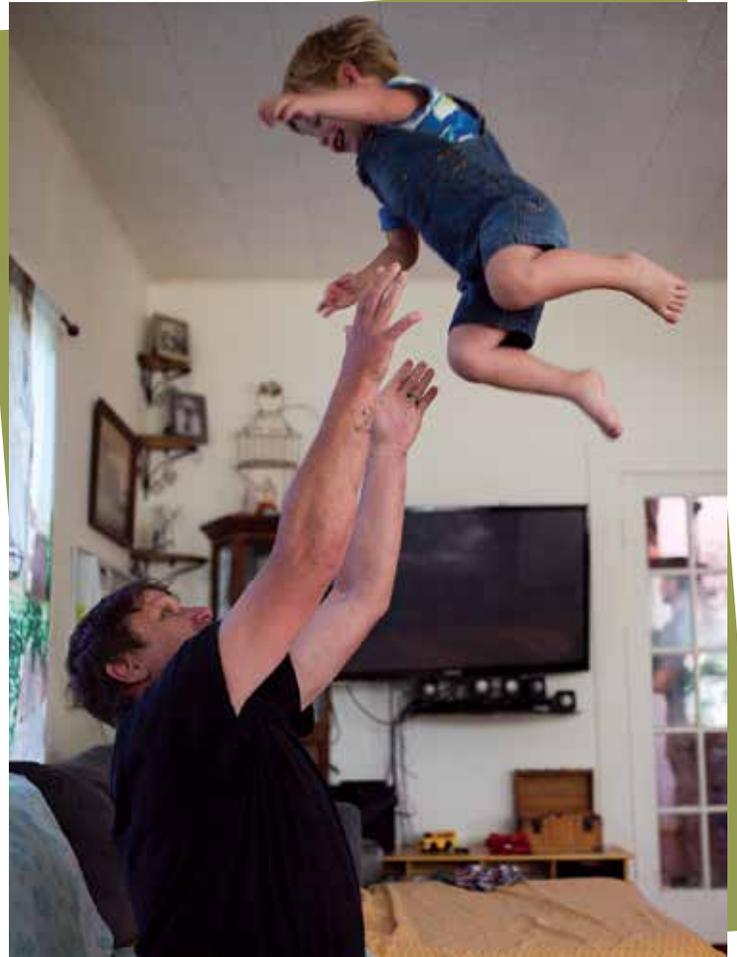
She says she has been pleasantly surprised by Bunker Hill, though. "This is a really good place to figure out where you might go with your education," she says.

Across the country, college administrators are increasingly seeing students like her.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin surveyed more than 4,000 undergrads at community colleges across the country.

The results? Twenty percent of students reported being hungry, 13 percent homeless.

Sara Goldrick-Rab, a sociologist who led the research team, says it's not just that college students need to work while



in school. "It's that they're working, and borrowing," she says, "and sometimes still falling so short that they're going without having their basic needs met."

Goldrick-Rab says she believes state and federal governments should work together to help college students find a place to live and something to eat so that they're ready to learn and, eventually, graduate.

"Most people think, 'Well, if you're really poor, and you really don't have money to eat, you can get food stamps,'" she says. "What they don't know is that for a college student, who doesn't have children, to get food stamps requires that they work 20 hours a week."

And that's exactly what the first-year student from Bunker Hill has managed to do. She's putting in 20 hours a week at a physics lab close by and has recently saved enough to rent an apartment with two roommates. She says she still needs help affording tuition and transportation.

"I don't really need a whole lot of this or that. It's nice, but what helps me the most is people thinking that I'm going to make it." And her classmates and professors, she says, who allow her to feel like a normal college student.



Update!

An update to this story aired on March 15, 2017, on WBGH.

New survey results out today show that the rates of hungry and homeless students at community colleges across the country are higher than previously thought.

The results, published by researchers at the University of Wisconsin, show that one third of community college students go hungry and 14 percent are homeless.

Those rates are up from 2015, when the same research team surveyed 4,000 community college students in 10 states, and found one fifth were without adequate nutrition. Thirteen percent were homeless.

Today's results come from a much wider survey sample, more than 33,000 students, at 70 community colleges in 24 states.

"Not only did we find challenges of food insecurity and housing insecurity at the less expensive community colleges, we found it at more expensive colleges," says sociologist Sara Goldrick-Rab, who led the research team.

"We found it at urban schools and rural schools. It's all over the place," she adds.

Researchers say — short of longer term solutions — colleges should partner with local homeless shelters and food banks to better address students' needs.

Goldrick-Rab says rates of hunger and homelessness are higher this time, in part, because her team surveyed earlier in the term before the most vulnerable students dropped out.



Michael and Andrew Ride to Fight Hunger

Check out the inspiring way 15- and 13-year-olds, Michael and Andrew Hyde, are raising funds to help the Vermont Foodbank end hunger.

Hi, our names are Michael and Andrew Hyde! We were both born and raised in New York City. We have been traveling to Vermont since we were toddlers. We have fond memories of swimming in the beautiful ponds, eating delicious local food, and staying in a lovely farmhouse. Vermont is an awesome escape from crowded New York. Vermonters are some of the friendliest people out there. For example, Dorsi Reynolds from the Upper Valley Aquatic Center lets us swim with her team. Phil White organized for us to compete in the Kingdom Swim in Lake Memphremagog. It makes us truly happy when we go to Vermont.

About a year ago we rode in the 50-mile event out of Harpoon Brewery, called the Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group. This is an event that supports the Vermont Foodbank and helps people get the food they need. We learned about their work and some of the hardships that 25 percent of Vermonters have to go through to obtain enough food for their families. It was surprising to us that in the wealthiest country in the world there can be so much hunger.

We started thinking about how we could fight hunger. Over this summer we are going to ride 800 miles in total to raise money for the Vermont Foodbank. Michael is going to ride 550 miles from Reno, Nevada, to Los Angeles, and Andrew is riding 250 miles from the bottom of beautiful Vermont to the top.

Overall our goal is to raise \$5,000 for the Vermont Foodbank. We are reaching out to friends and family and asking some small businesses based in Vermont to sponsor us. We know this is a very difficult objective, and so we have also designed T-shirts and wristbands to sell. We are going to be performing some jazz concerts before we ride. But these activities alone will not help us reach our ambitious goal, so we need your help. We hope you will consider donating to this worthy cause.

We would like to thank those who have given us such wonderful memories of Vermont. To those who are hungry, we're here to fight alongside you!

*Thank you,
Michael and Andrew*

Please visit our Ride to Fight Hunger page:
<https://fundraise.vtfoodbank.org/team/105419>



Start Your Own Adventure to Help Our Neighbors!

Michael and Andrew are starting something big. Learn how you too can turn your passion into action. You can use your unique interests and celebrations to help us end hunger in Vermont.

You don't have to be wealthy to make a generous contribution. You can make a huge difference by setting up a personal fundraising webpage and sharing it far and wide. Are you beginning a journey or tackling an exciting new adventure? Take on a challenge for a cause and add a goal to raise money for the Vermont Foodbank! It's quick and easy. Whether you are preparing for your first marathon or celebrating your birthday, it could be the perfect occasion for a DIY fundraiser.

Every year, cyclists who ride the Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group set up fundraising pages to share their rides and their passion for ending hunger with their friends and family. By giving their network a way to join their adventures, they spread awareness and raise funds to end hunger. Last year, 740 riders raised more than \$210,000. That's a whole lot of meals to share with 153,000 neighbors in need.

Great news: You don't need to be cyclist to raise money for the Vermont Foodbank. You can use any event or activity as an occasion to help. Consider setting up a fundraiser for your birthday or your wedding – the perfect gift for someone who has everything. Ask for donations instead of material gifts. Climb a mountain, knit a blanket, or try a new hobby. The potential is limitless!

Choose something that you enjoy and give it a try. **Create your own fundraising page and ask your friends and family to help you provide nutritious, healthy food to Vermont families in need of some extra help.**

Learn more here: www.vtfoodbank.org/DIY



Save
the
Date

Upcoming Events

Hearts for Hunger 5K/1K Fun Run & Walk

**United Church of Hinesburg
May 20, 2017, 9AM-12PM**

Lace up your running shoes and join us for this great event to raise funds for our Backpack Program. Last year's run raised an incredible \$7,500 to help feed children facing hunger in our communities.

To learn more and sign up, visit:

www.vtfoodbank.org/event/hearts-for-hunger



Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group Harpoon Brewery in Windsor, VT August 12, 2017

Registration is open for this year's Harpoon Point to Point presented by National Life Group. Choose to ride 100, 50, 25 miles on the road or the 20-mile mountain bike ride at Ascutney. This well-supported ride will take you over covered bridges and through gorgeous Vermont landscapes. A festive post-ride party awaits you when you cross the finish line at the Harpoon Brewery, complete with hot showers, delicious BBQ, live music and fresh beer, straight from the source!

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



Last year this event raised a record \$210,505 for the Vermont Foodbank!

Since its inception, the Harpoon Point to Point has raised \$1,311,190 to feed our neighbors who face hunger.

We are truly grateful to our riders, sponsors and supporters for making this possible and for ensuring that everyone in our community has the healthy food they need to thrive.

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

We're very social! Join us on:



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