



THE Vermont Community Foundation

Dhyana Bradley, College Connections Coordinator for Linking Learning to Life, with program participants. In 2008 the J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation, a supporting foundation of the VCF, made a \$10,000 grant to help expand the program.



FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

One of the great benefits of taking a job like this one is that you get to do a lot of listening. And in my short time at the Vermont Community Foundation, I am fortunate indeed to be hearing from an incredible group of people. I feel lucky to be joining this organization and the Vermont community.

The philanthropists I'm meeting – many of them donors to the Foundation, others not – are more committed than ever to building a strong state. I hear real passion about their wishes to help nonprofits through the current downturn. Even more, I hear real passion about the desire to help nonprofits make plans for the future – for better times ahead.

The nonprofit leaders I'm meeting are approaching their jobs with resilience and creativity – working mightily to continue delivering their services today, while clarifying their core missions and making plans for the coming years.

We at the Vermont Community Foundation remain committed to engaging philanthropists, nonprofits, and community leaders. I am bullish about our work, the nonprofit sector, and the strength of Vermont communities. Though I may have wished to come in a time of financial growth, I am equally energized to become part of this organization – with its great staff and board – in these tough times. Thanks for your partnership, and I look forward to forging a bright future together.

Stuart Comstock-Gay
President & CEO

Philanthropy and Postsecondary Education

If you follow trends in foundation giving, you may have noticed that the issue of access to postsecondary education has been getting a lot of attention lately, both at the national level and in Vermont. There's good reason for that: research suggests that the benefits of education and training beyond high school extend far and wide into the community. College graduates, for example, are more likely to have healthy families, volunteer, and engage in entrepreneurial endeavors. And as economies shift from manufacturing to knowledge-based enterprises, jobs will increasingly require additional training and education.

The issue certainly caught the attention of the **J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation**, which is a part of the Vermont Community Foundation. Last year, the McClure Foundation commissioned the VCF to produce a report for philanthropists that highlights the challenges and opportunities involved

in helping Vermonters continue their training and education after they leave the secondary school system.

Among the promising approaches highlighted by the report: dual enrollment programs that expose high school students to college-level courses; vocational-technical programs that provide cost-effective options for students interested in health care, technology, and design fields, among others; and programs that help create achievement-oriented cultures in secondary schools. A new fund at the Vermont Community Foundation will pool and distribute contributions to these and other approaches.

In producing the report, the McClure Foundation and the VCF hope to foster productive dialogue on an issue that is fast developing momentum and has tremendous opportunity to ensure a prosperous future for Vermont. Visit www.understandingvt.org to download a copy or request a printed copy.

Symington Named Executive Director

The High Meadows Fund has named Gaye Symington as its Executive Director. The Fund is a supporting foundation of the VCF, and its grantmaking aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, encourage renewable energy development, and promote sustainable agriculture and land use practices in Vermont.

President of the Fund Carl Ferenbach said, "We were in search of a leader who is passionate about addressing environmental challenges and for whom the specialness of Vermont is second nature. We wanted a person who would be capable of leading Vermont toward solutions, and we are pleased to say that Gaye is that person."

Symington believes in the philanthropic sector's ability to strengthen economic development and promote environmental conservation. She explained, "If Vermont wants to create good jobs and build more viable communities, it needs to explore different ways of growing food, heating and powering homes, and providing transportation. I am excited to continue the Fund's work supporting these initiatives and bringing about systemic change."

The Power of Collaboration



Pictured above, l to r are David Thurlow, Foodbank; Michelle Jeffery, VPR; Peter Espenshade, VCF; Franny Bastian, VPR; Stuart Comstock-Gay, VCF; Robin Turnau, VPR; John Sayles, Christine Foster, and Edward Fox, Foodbank.

The Vermont Community Foundation was very excited to partner with Vermont Public Radio (VPR) during its March pledge drive to provide support to the Vermont Foodbank, an organization that supplies 270 charitable food programs throughout the state. For every pledge made by a VPR listener, the Foundation donated five meals to the Vermont Foodbank.

The final donation to the foodbank was 40,250 meals — thank you VPR listeners! We recently received this nice note from VPR member Sara Gilbert of Castleton, "It felt so good to know that when I made my pledge I was also prompting the Vermont Community Foundation to donate to the foodbank. Thank you for being a friend to those in need around our state."

Your Questions for Stuart

Stuart has been busy visiting people around the state since he came on board in late January. Here are some of the questions he's heard.



Q: How are donors dealing with the economic downturn?

A: Donors are definitely feeling the pinch, but it is clear that they remain committed to keeping our communities strong, however they are able. As a testament to this, donor contributions to the Foundation's recent discretionary grant round increased by 57% over last year. This additional support allowed us to more than double the grant dollars awarded. Thank you!

Q: What advice are you giving to donors?

A: We are focused on helping donors be strategic about current grantmaking and discussing bequests and other planned giving tools that will ensure their philanthropy leaves a legacy. Additionally, we are talking to interested private foundations

about converting to VCF donor advised funds, which offer tax benefits, greater grantmaking flexibility, and can often reduce operating costs.

Q: How are current economic conditions affecting the Foundation?

A: Like other foundations, our primary investment portfolio declined in 2008. However, we did outperform our target benchmark by 1.1%, ending the year at -27.5%. This decline, combined with lower interest rates, reduced our revenue stream, and we took serious steps to cut our operating budget, which unfortunately included layoffs. This was an extremely difficult decision, and we thank our former colleagues for their hard work on behalf of Vermont. On the grantmaking side, we expect our 2009 VCF Community Fund grant awards to remain at last year's levels.

Stuart is always happy to hear from you. Please contact him at scomstock-gay@vermontcf.org or 802-388-3355 x223.

Giving Connects Generations



The Landmann family, pictured above, often gathers in Vermont, the place where Fred and Conny honeymooned and retired, and a place that holds special meaning for all of them.

As part of an ongoing series about our fundholders, we asked sisters Kathy Bissett and Meryl French to tell us about their family's philanthropy. Both are advisors to the Landmann Family Fund, a donor advised fund established by their parents:

We were always taught by our parents that the two essential things to give your children, to the extent possible, are health and education. Those values have been deeply instilled throughout our lifetimes and our children hear those echoes. For us, philanthropy is a family affair that is influenced by many life experiences.

Sadly, we were touched closely by the pain of losing a cherished family member prematurely, and the opportunity to give to causes close to our hearts helps make some sense and goodness out of the pain. In this spirit, supporting cancer causes, particularly breast cancer, is our top giving priority.

Our parents Conny and Fred Landmann immigrated to the USA from Holland and Germany,

respectively. Their experiences before and during Hitler's rise to power were clearly life altering, and in our father's memoirs he wrote openly about the atrocities he hoped would never be repeated. Because of this deep connection, Holocaust-related relief and social justice concerns are a big part of our family's giving.

About 15 years ago, our parents underscored their commitment to philanthropy by giving each family member the opportunity to choose one or more charities to receive a grant. Thus, everyone, including the teenaged grandchildren, could share what their gift meant to them. The tradition still continues each year – what a sense of empowerment and what a legacy!

We are very happy that VCF Senior Philanthropic Advisor Lisa Cashdan meets regularly with our mother; our father has passed away. Lisa has become a trusted family friend and she not only helps us with grantmaking paperwork, but helps us make thoughtful decisions about our giving. This is a true benefit of working with the Vermont Community Foundation.

Responsive Grantmaking

Our **Special and Urgent Needs (SUN)** grants program allows the Foundation to respond in a timely way to both unforeseen crises and opportunities that arise for Vermont's nonprofits. The online application is simple and grant decisions are made within 21 days of receiving the application.

The need in 2008 was tremendous, and both the number of applications and the total dollar amount requested more than doubled from 2007. We received 65 applications requesting \$314,956, and we **awarded 22 grants totaling \$88,716.**

Special thanks to Lois McClure for her generous support of the SUN program.

2008 SUN Grant Awards

ALANA Community Organization .	\$5,000
Battered Women's Services and Shelter	\$4,000
COVER Home Repair.	\$3,500
George D. Aiken Resource Conservation and Development Council	\$5,000
Kids Place	\$5,000
Kingdom Mentoring Program	\$5,000
Lamoille Area Recreational Center .	\$5,000
Little School.	\$1,400
Magic Mountain Children's Center.	\$1,000
Morristown Historical Society	\$1,250
Preservation Trust of Vermont	\$5,000
Randolph Area Community Development Corporation	\$5,000
Rochester Community Care Home.	\$4,500
Southeastern Vermont Community Action	\$5,000
The Children's Garden	\$5,000
United Way of Chittenden County .	\$5,000
Upper Valley Humane Society	\$5,000
Vermont State College Foundation. .	\$5,000
Vermont Youth Orchestra Association	\$1,250
Watershed Mentoring.	\$2,500
White River Craft Center	\$5,000
Women's Rape Crisis Center	\$4,316

Visit our website for more details.

News & Notes

VCF Community Fund Grantmaking Revised

In response to the current economic climate, the Foundation will offer Spring (deadline: May 15) and Fall (deadline: Sept. 25) grant rounds **to fund general operating support** for organizations working in one of our three priority paths: Basic Human Needs, Successful Communities, and Sustainable Communities. Please visit www.vermontcf.org/apply for more information.

Nonprofit Consultant Directory Launched

In January we launched the **Vermont Directory of Nonprofit Consultants**, a free online resource designed to assist nonprofit organizations in the “how” and “why” of hiring a consultant, help nonprofits identify prospective consultants, and aid consultants working with the nonprofit community. To learn more visit www.vtnonprofitconsultants.org.

\$50,000 Strategic Grant Awarded: We awarded a two-year grant to help the Center for Media & Democracy launch **CommonGoodVT.org**, a two-year pilot network designed to raise the visibility of Vermont’s independent sector and improve the capacity of its nonprofit organizations. Become a part of this new network at www.commongoodvt.org.

Partnership

Attorney **Sarah Gentry Tischler** was raised in tiny St. George, Vermont, in a family committed to community service, where the question was never “Can I make a difference?” It was simply the underlying assumption.



In her estate planning and charitable giving practice with Langrock Sperry & Wool, LLP, Sarah brings this core principle to planning discussions with her clients.

Says Sarah, “We all want to make a difference. It’s our legacy, whether for our family or our communities. It’s important to give clients the opportunity to consider that legacy.”

In these stressful economic times, Sarah feels that the VCF’s services are more critical than ever. She values our technical expertise and broad understanding of community needs and believes that collaboration with the Foundation can be a very important part of helping clients maximize the impact of their legacy.

Sarah is part of our Planned Giving Design Center community. Visit www.pgdc.com/vcf to take advantage of this free, VCF-sponsored resource, which offers helpful tools, articles, and member forums. Great for all professional advisors!



We’d love to hear from you!

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