



## VERMONT YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS VYCC'S FOOD AND FARM PROGRAM NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR TOP YOUTH CORPS PROJECT OF THE YEAR

*VYCC's Health Care Share Among Projects Honored By The Corps Network*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RICHMOND, VT, Thursday, December 21, 2017 –**

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)'s Health Care Share (HCS) was among four national Youth Corps projects honored by The Corps Network at the end of 2017. The HCS is a community-based public health project that connects Vermont families unable to afford or access nutritious food with a weekly share of farm fresh produce. The program is managed by VYCC staff and supported largely through AmeriCorps service members.



*VYCC's youth crew harvests green beans for the weekly Health Care Share.  
Photo courtesy of the VYCC. Print-ready version available by request.*

Paul Feenan, Director of VYCC's Food and Farm Program proudly remarked, "what an honor it is for the Health Care Share to be recognized by the Corps Network. From a deeply personal perspective, creating a connection between the youth in the agriculture and conservation movements sits atop my professional achievements. Countless individuals made this achievement possible, and I sincerely hope they all feel a sense of profound



accomplishment. We will see to it that this award puts wind in our sails for more work in the near and distant future.”

VYCC Farm Crews grow, pack, and deliver weekly and/or monthly shares to hospitals, family practices, and community clinics. Health Care Providers identify patients and employees who have distinct needs (food insecurity, diabetes, heart conditions, etc.) and would benefit from the program. In addition to addressing food security, health concerns, and local job training needs, the HCS has expanded VYCC’s visibility and capacity to engage more young adults.

"The Health Care Share program represents everything we look for in a successful Corps project," said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, President & CEO of The Corps Network. "This program provides a tangible benefit to the community and creates opportunities for young adults to learn and develop valuable skills. While several of our more than 130 member Corps across the country operate outstanding farm programs, this is one of the largest and is the only program that incorporates strong partnerships with the health care community. We applaud VYCC for their innovation and leadership in this field."

In 2017, the HCS engaged 70 youth and young adults, 43 of whom were paid high school aged individuals. These Corps Members received employment training, personal nutrition and finance lessons, and a weekly HCS for their family. Throughout the year, HCS crews completed 50 weeks of service, totaling approximately 10,800 service hours. Additionally, 700 volunteers contributed 3,500 service hours for an estimated financial value of \$84,000. In all, 140,000 pounds of food were distributed to more than 500 families, benefiting approximately 1,700 individuals. In addition to the Farm at VYCC, 13 privately owned Vermont farms partnered with the HCS by hosting VYCC Crews and growing produce for the share. VYCC Farm Crews are increasingly seen as a valued, nimble, and affordable labor source for farmers during critical moments of the growing and harvesting season.



Breck Knauft, Executive Director of VYCC remarked, “Watching VYCC’s farm crew is akin to witnessing solutions in action. Youth and young adults working and learning together while making an essential difference in the lives of so many represents the best of Vermont and the broader service movement. To have this innovative and life-changing program be recognized nationally, from thousands of Youth Corps projects, is truly an honor.”

Full Health Care Share Corps Network Award recognition posted here:

<http://www.corpsnetwork.org/2018-project-year-vermont-youth-conservation-corps-health-care-share-program>

#### **More about VYCC’s Health Care Share:**

The Health Care Share provides food-insecure Vermonters with nutrition education, medical care, and local farm-fresh food. Each week of the growing season and into the winter, more than 300 families receive a share of fruit, vegetables, herbs, and pasture-raised poultry from the Farm at VYCC, 500 families statewide. HCS Members are enrolled by their physician and pick up shares at their doctor’s office and regional hospitals in: Bennington, Chittenden, Orleans, Rutland, Washington counties.

For more information contact:

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#### **More about the Corps Network and Awards:**

The Corps Network is the national association of Service and Conservation Corps. Each year they recognize a handful of Youth Corps programs for Corps Member of the Year, Project of the Year, and Legacy Achievement Awards. These three awards represent the highest honors The Corps Network grants and are a significant achievement within the national Corps movement. The awards are presented on an annual basis to select individuals and organizations from The Corps Network’s membership of over 130 Service and Conservation Corps, working on thousands of projects across the country. Recipients are chosen through competitive nomination and peer-review processes. Four [Project of the Year Awards](#) are presented on an annual basis to Corps that have undertaken especially influential or innovative endeavors within the past year. Projects of the Year are noteworthy for their ability to provide both a positive experience for Corps Members and meaningful improvements to the community. Staff from The Corps Network as well as outside reviewers from member Corps select the winners of this award.



Honorees will be recognized at [The Trail Ahead – The Corps Network’s 2018 National Conference](#) – taking place February 11 – 14 in Washington, DC. [CorpsNetwork.org](#)

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**More about VYCC:**

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps is a 501c3 nonprofit youth development organization with a mission to teach young people personal responsibility through meaningful work that connects us to the land, community, and one another. For more than 30 years, VYCC has instilled the values of personal responsibility, hard work, education, and respect for the environment in young people. VYCC Corps Members, young adults 15-24, work, live, and learn together in small groups, completing priority conservation and agriculture projects throughout Vermont under the guidance of highly trained Crew Leaders. [www.vycc.org](http://www.vycc.org)

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