



VERMONT YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS



GRATITUDE REPORT 2019

SEE THE DIFFERENCE YOU MADE

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are all digging deep right now, adapting to tough conditions and drawing on reserves. As we step up to help neighbors, we're finding comfort and inspiration in acts of selflessness and kindness. Times like these affirm the importance of a close-knit community.

I'm thinking a lot about the future – when will COVID end and what will the world look like? What are the strengths that will get us through? How can the strength of the VYCC mission and programs play a role in addressing racism? I have found great comfort and learned much from talking with Corps Members.

To learn about the needs of recent alumni and to find ways to be helpful, we launched Corps Member Connect and reached out to nearly 600 alumni and Corps Members this spring. The biggest takeaway from these conversations was that VYCC alumni are helping others with creative and personalized approaches. Initiative, drive, empathy, and even a bit of quirkiness all shine through. You can find a short summary of Corps Member response to COVID-19 on the next page.

This 2019 report includes stories that capture the power of VYCC: teamwork and learning, service and determination, and stewardship and conservation. The VYCC experience endures and will get us through. Thank you for your support, which makes these experiences possible.



Breck Knauft,
Executive Director



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LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Dear friends and supporters,

Let's SEE the Future - Service, Education, and Employment. VYCC's greatest strength lies in teaching young adults through work-based service opportunities. Getting outdoors, working hard alongside new friends with different perspectives...it's great fun and a serious challenge for young people.

Young adults seek out VYCC to make a difference, to get outdoors, and to build the necessary skills to achieve their goals.

As we pull through these unprecedented times and look ahead, service opportunities, education and employment are what young adults need most. VYCC is forming and exploring partnerships with a variety of institutions so we can provide our young people with the experiences they need and want.

I'm proud of the way VYCC is responding with empathy and grit. Both are needed. Equally important is a focus on safety and financial health; to that end, we're ready to complete projects this year.

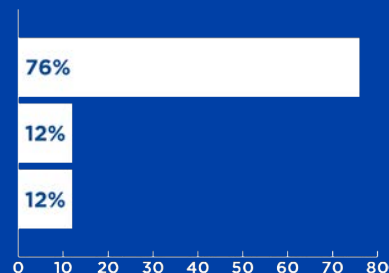
Now, let's leverage the power of the Corps model to build a pathway to future opportunities. I hope you and your families are well and safe. With appreciation for your interest and investment in VYCC,

George Russell,
Board Chair

YOUNG PEOPLE STEPPED UP IN 2019.

They worked hard, they are committed to protecting our planet, and they have untold contributions to make.

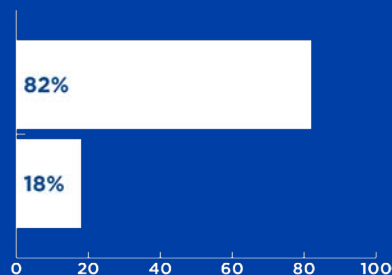
WHO ARE THEY?



76% Vermonters

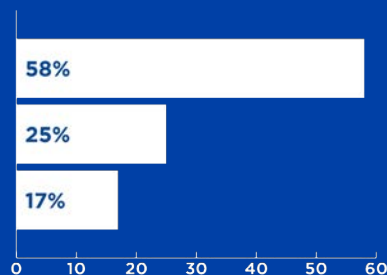
12% from the Northeast

12% from farther afield



82% Joined for the first time

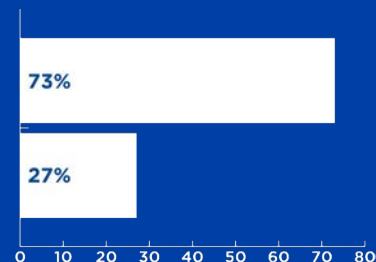
18% Returners



58% Youth Crew Members
(ages 15-18)

25% Young Adult Crew
Members (ages 17-25)

17% Crew Leaders (ages 20-30)



73% Conservation Crews

27% Farm Crews



HOW ARE THEY DOING NOW?

The pandemic has driven students to remote learning and derailed young professionals. Alumni have returned home; they have lost jobs and gotten creative to find new work; and are committing countless acts of kindness.

**OF ALL 2019 MEMBERS
AND LEADERS:**

54%

are continuing high school

8%

**are continuing college or post
college education online**

24%

have finished school

14%

unknown/unconfirmed

In May, we reached out to see how Members are impacted by COVID-19. We heard from many and learned that, as a group, their top current concern is employment, followed by physical and mental health.

35%

are continuing school

73%

are working

23%

**were furloughed/
lost employment and
are now employed**

8%

**lost their employment
and did not find other work**

Alumni are drawing on strengths honed at VYCC. Just

like tackling a VYCC project, they are identifying problems, taking initiative, and asking how can I contribute. Here are four updates to give you a quick snapshot of the VYCC spirit:

- Hayley Jones is volunteering with Open Door as a tele health interpreter.
- Val Pelayo signed up to be a volunteer interpreter for medical centers that cater to immigrants.
- Galileo Defendi-Cho is delivering food to those at risk who do not want to leave their house to shop.
- Sammy Levine is managing Skinny Pancake's ShiftMeals project

CAREER READINESS

Moving rocks is a common trail building challenge that takes teamwork and communication.



VYCC alumni use their time in Vermont's forests and working lands to launch careers as conservationists, educators, elected officials, and more. In 2019 we expanded our capacity to connect the VYCC experience to meaningful careers and ongoing community service.

Shea was a Crew Member in 2017, and returned in 2019 as a Crew Leader. In the interim, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Shea's sights were set

clearly upon a Master's Degree that combines Social Work with Outdoor Education, but he had to overcome several barriers before he could apply.

Because we now speak with every Corps Member about future plans, we learned that Shea is interested in a graduate program in New Hampshire, but needs to establish residency and gain two years relevant experience before he can apply. We helped Shea secure employment. He is establishing residency and gaining relevant work experience with two jobs; one in outdoor education and one wilderness therapy. He plans to start school in fall 2021. In a recent update, Shea shared, "I just wanted to send along a huge

thank you for all of your support along the way. I couldn't have done it without you."

Shea's story is typical. Shea and many of his peers know what they want to achieve. It's the path to get there that's unclear. We help alumni connect their short-term, concrete plans with terrific, long-term aspirations.

Through stronger alumni support services, we learned that one third of our young adult members did not have plans following VYCC. **VYCC staff worked one-on-one with 30% of Members lacking plans post-VYCC**, identifying potential career pathways, helping them gain clarity on next step opportunities, and making direct introductions to employers.

WATER QUALITY & THE WOMEN OF WILDERNESS

Ellie, Gloria, Celia, Anya, Mia, Katherine, Sam, Hannah, and Emily were the 2019 Women of Wilderness – WoW! Perhaps they should have called themselves the Women of Water, because they navigated kayaks on Lake Champlain for three weeks, hand-pulling invasive Water Chestnut.

Of these hardworking high school and college-age Members, only a few had outdoor experience. By the end of summer, they could all read the wind and water,

respond safely when storms are on the way, handle a variety of tools, and set up an outdoor kitchen.

Kim Jensen from the Vermont Department of Environmental

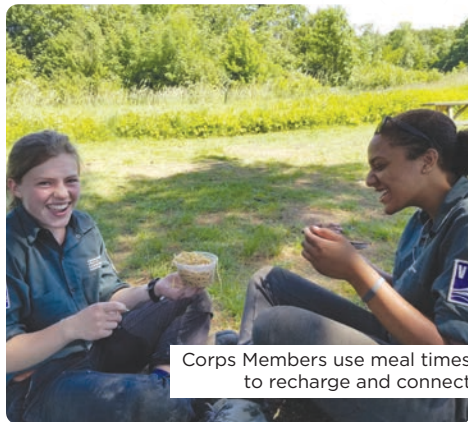


Celia, Mia and Sam have brought a strengthened work ethic back to high school. Katherine and Gloria are applying lessons learned in college.

Conservation helped them learn plant identification, aquatic ecology principles, and the impact of their work on local ecosystems. To top it off, the crew got a fly-fishing lesson from Vermont Fish & Wildlife's Educational Specialist, Corey Hart.

As a result of their perseverance, the lake has 18,000 fewer plants threatening native fish, bird, insect, and plant species. In total, **85 of last summer's Corps Members completed 14 water quality projects in Vermont.** All Crew Leaders completed a hands-on workshop on hydrology and watershed dynamics, and UVM Water Quality Intern Kayla Riker delivered workshops to seven crews.

RESILIENCE WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST



Corps Members use meal times to recharge and connect

The VYCC experience is deliberately hard. Imagine being a Crew Leader where you lead eight high school students in their first job, in the woods, away from home for the first time. All the while, the project sponsor has high expectations and the project is a technically challenging bridge design.

Or, you're a Crew Member and you've never camped before and now it's your first night on a one-month Camping crew and you're not sure if you have what it takes. Yikes!

These conditions lead to profound growth. Within this setting, we are committed to providing the support our Members and Leaders need. In 2019, we partnered with Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services to foster resilience, confidence, and self-care for Leaders and Members. Leaders gained tools to be proactive and respond appropriately and empathetically to mental health events in the field. Centerpoint staff was on-call for situations requiring professional support.

Today's youth thrive in environments with a balance of challenge and support. Members and Leaders in 2019 demonstrated they have what it takes to work hard and make meaningful contributions, often exceeding their own expectations. At the same time, they took full advantage of added supports: **on average, VYCC Members utilized our new supports every two days.**



LEADERSHIP & LEARNING



Hayley, second from right, works with a crew to prepare a farm-fresh lunch for 60 Members and Leaders.

As a Crew Leader on the Farm, Hayley worked with Crew Members to grow vegetables and tend livestock. Prior to VYCC, Hayley had never worked on a farm. She admits, “Everything was new. There were so many situations where I didn’t know what I was doing.” She reflects on what she gained:

“College taught me that I had to know everything. VYCC taught me that it’s okay to not

know the answer and to ask somebody else who will. It’s really important to model that learning process for Members.”

In the kitchen, Hayley was a student and a mentor. She learned how to scale up recipes, and how to improvise when they didn’t have something. Hayley recalls a Crew Member who was not particularly comfortable in the kitchen:

“I would kind of poke him and encourage him to take initiative on recipes even if they turned out wonky. That’s the point! I didn’t really expect it to amount to anything, but at the end of summer this Member and I were driving back to the bus pickup and he suddenly started to ask me all sorts of questions about the appropriate nut to use in

pesto and about greens he had at home.”

In 2019, Farm Crews made lunch for one another: each day a small crew broke away from the fields to make a fresh meal using ingredients from the Farm. Members learned to make salad dressings, beet hummus, pesto, and pizza from scratch.

For the many Members who struggle with food insecurity, preparing a healthy mid day meal enhances learning and helps their family’s Health Care Share go even farther.

Hayley is currently working as a community organizer at a nonprofit working on behalf of clean air and water. She draws on the interpersonal skills she gained at VYCC every day.

HEALTH CARE SHARE



The Health Care share has been a vital public health resource since 2012. VYCC crews grow, package and deliver food to our community while learning about food production, food preparation and nutrition.

Last year, 431 households participated in the Health Care Share. Of these households, 79% had a member who struggles

with diet-related illness, one third had at least one child, and 17% included at least one senior. All told, VYCC Corps Members grew 60,000 pounds of fresh produce – 45 kinds of vegetables – for Health Care Share member families, and raised 800 chickens.

Partners distributed Health Care Shares to households in five counties: UVM Medical Center, Central Vermont Medical Center, North Country Hospital & Northern Counties Health Care (Island Pond), Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (St. Johnsbury), and Richmond Family Medicine. (See map on page 14!)

Last year, Katie took part in the Health Care Share's eighth season. She tells us, "I had a baby last

DEFINITION OF FOOD SECURITY

Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

year. I went on maternity leave; I could not afford to go to farmers markets." She describes the Health Care Share as a blessing, including its nutrition education, because it helped her "get back on track postpartum. I started making kale smoothies."

Now, Katie experiments more with recipes, enjoys dark leafy green vegetables, and can't wait for this season's Swiss chard. "I didn't know anything about Swiss chard and now it's my



favorite thing. The Health Care Share motivated me to start a garden this year. We're growing Swiss chard, kale, lettuce, yellow peppers, and tomatoes."

Katie's child turns one this summer. She is joyful and active, and Katie has already introduced her to peas, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, carrots and zucchini.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



The Woodstock Crew meets with Governor Phil Scott at Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park

Meet-Ups connect Corps Members with their community. They speak publicly about their work and field questions. Families join as Members meet community leaders, including the following guests: Congressman Peter Welch, Governor Phil Scott, Lt.

Governor David Zuckerman, Senate Pro Tem Tim Ashe, State Representatives Jill Krowinski and John Killacky, Barre City Mayor Lucas Herring, Barre City Manager Steven Mackenzie, and Burlington City Councilor Sharon Bushor.

Project partners, local officials, parents, friends, VYCC alumni, and grateful community members met Conservation crews for:

- Water bar building 101 in the Barre Cow Pasture trails: Washington County Crew
- Exploring a new trail in the Owls Head Town Forest: Dorset Crew
- Learning how and why a new staircase was built at Schmanska Park: Burlington Community Crew
- Enjoying vastly improved sections of the Allen Brook Trail: Williston Community Crew
- Meandering the new riverside path in Pownal: Women of Wilderness Crew

- Discovering new and improved areas of Wheeler Park: South Burlington Community Crew
- Two overviews (one per session) of a variety of projects at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park: Woodstock Community Crew
- A demonstration of how to reduce storm water runoff into Lake Elmore: Lamoille County Crew



Jay explains the how and why of timber staircases at Schmanska Park to Senator Tim Ashe.



STATEHOUSE DAY

On March 13, 2019, eight alumni joined us for a day of civics and learning under the golden dome. Alumni met with state leaders (including one-on-ones with Governor Scott, Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman, Senator Ashe, and Rep. Johnson) to proudly share their impact throughout the state, answer questions, and gain insight into our state government. They also observed the legislature in session.

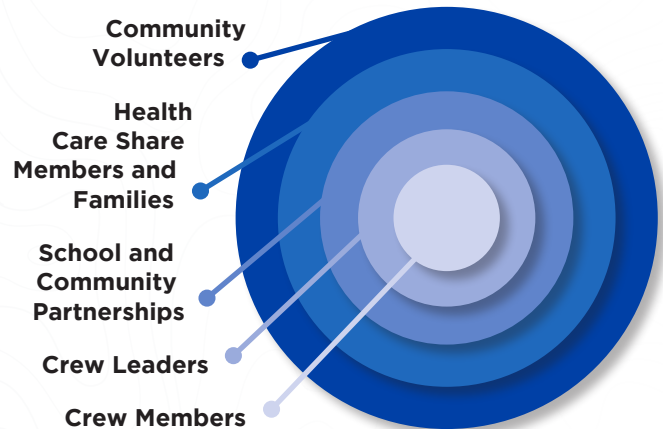
2019 VYCC PROJECT MAP

In all, 224 young adults dug deep to learn, grow, and make a difference in 2019. They constructed/maintained 50 miles of trails; planted 736 native plants; grew 60,000 pounds of vegetables, delivered fresh food to 431 Vermont families; and built 179 drainage structures, 12 bridges, 5 remote toilets, a woodshed, and more.

In addition to making our state healthier and more resilient, Members benefitted from connection to their communities, immersion in the outdoors, and developing critical skills toward becoming effective professionals and community leaders.

In total, VYCC programs directly impact over **2,000 PEOPLE EACH YEAR.** This is in addition to all Vermonters who enjoy outdoor recreation, a healthy environment, and a robust community food system.

● Farm Project Site
● Conservation Project Site





ACCREDITATION AND THE CORPS NETWORK

VYCC hosted The Corps Network's annual board retreat in August. The visit coincided with a Crew Campus Week, where several crews completed projects and education on campus. A highlight for many board members was the opportunity to meet VYCC Corps Members and learn about their experiences.

Lori Johnston, Chair of TCN's board, reflected, "We were incredibly impressed with VYCC's leadership after spending the morning touring and learning the range and scope of their programs. VYCC is an amazing model organization for us all to learn from."

Hosting The Corps Network was an inspiring way to cap off a great summer. Breck Knauft,

Executive Director, shares, "While we focus on Vermont, we're also contributing to a larger conversation about the importance of national service. We appreciate the high marks and are proud to have Vermont be a leader in the Corps movement. If our programs spark innovation and expansive thinking that serves young adults from across the country, well then that's one more example of Vermont leadership at work!"

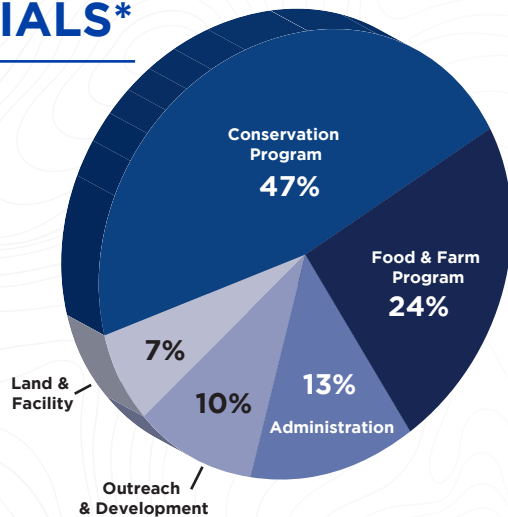
VYCC gained national accreditation in 2019. To gain accreditation, Corps must demonstrate strong financial management, risk management, HR practices, governance, and youth programming operations. VYCC received accreditation from the Corps

Center of Excellence, the national accrediting body for Service and Conservation Corps.



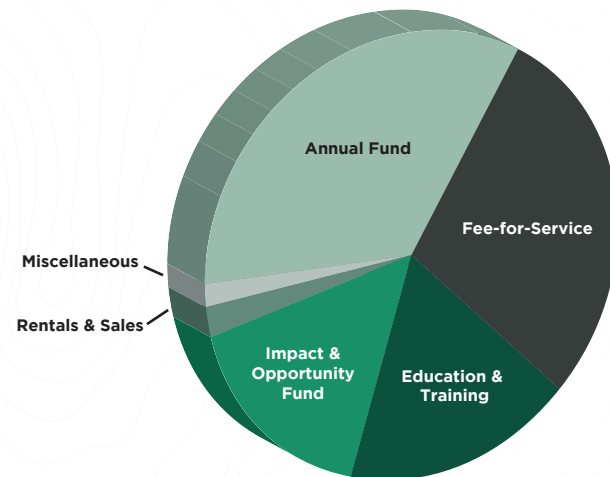
Corps Network Board and Corps Members celebrated together with an ice cream social hosted by Jerry Greenfield. From Left: Corps Network board member, the Hon. Louis Caldera, Former Secretary of the Army, United States Armed Forces; Naomi Galimidi, VYCC Development Director; Alison LaMantia, Corps Member; Jerry Greenfield, Ben & Jerry's; Caroline Bennett, Corps Member.

FINANCIALS*



SUMMARY OF EXPENSES

Conservation Program	\$1,364,772	47%
Food & Farm Program	\$697,137	24%
Outreach & Development	\$285,210	10%
Administration	\$381,369	13%
Land and Facility	\$203,623	7%
Total	\$2,932,111	



SUMMARY OF REVENUES

Annual Fund	\$1,069,314
Impact & Opportunity Fund	\$558,000
Education & Training	\$513,975
Fee-for-Service	\$899,340
Rentals & Sales	\$71,483
Miscellaneous	\$51,128
Total	\$3,163,240

*Unaudited figures as of 06/01/2020

BEX LOVE, CORPS MEMBER OF THE YEAR!

Corps Members of the Year are young people who, through their service, demonstrate personal growth, outstanding leadership skills, and a sincere commitment to helping their community. Here's Bex's story:

"I learned to see myself as a leader. I was nervous coming into a Conservation Corps program. I didn't know if I could handle backcountry living, and hardcore trail work. As a 4'11", queer, female-bodied person, I often come up against assumptions that I can't do certain things. Those



assumptions become ingrained in the view I have of myself. I was also nervous that my crew would see me through the lens of society's assumptions. But then I met them. We immediately celebrated each other.

"As I anticipated, the work was hard. We carried wet lumber up a mountain. We crushed, and moved so many

heavy rocks. However, I got stronger and stronger, and I was so proud to see what my body was capable of. As I got comfortable with the work, my Crew Leader saw leadership potential in me. He placed me in the role of Assistant Crew Leader, and to my surprise, I actually felt very ready to take on this challenge. With the help of my community around me, I had begun to thrive in an environment that was once scary and intimidating. The Corps experience had pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I was able to expand into a stronger version of myself."

Bex's crew worked June through October on invasive water chestnut removal, mountain bike trail

construction, and Appalachian Trail maintenance.

After their season, Bex volunteered in Puerto Rico on an organic farm that works as a nonprofit. They, along with five other Corps Members of the Year, were honored at a ceremony on February 12, 2020 on Capitol Hill as part of The Corps Network's 35th annual national conference.

"The Corps Network is humbled to engage with such inspiring people as Bex Love," said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, President and CEO of The Corps Network. "Corps Members of the Year are role models. Their personal stories and accomplishments are an inspiration to other young people serving in Corps across the country."

PARTNERS



We couldn't do it without you!
 Thank you for partnering with us on projects, providing in-kind support and camping sites, and lending your expertise and educational services!

- Barber Farm
- Bennington Country Planning Commission
- Bristol Recreation Club
- Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services
- Central Vermont Medical Center
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Champlain Valley Union High School
- City Market Onion River Co-op

- City of Barre
- City of Burlington
- City of South Burlington
- Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)
- EcoLibrium Landscape Design LLC
- EJU Ecumenical Food Shelf
- Equinox Preserve Trust
- Feeding Chittenden
- Food Science Corp
- Green Mountain Club
- Green Mountain Family Practice
- Green Mountain Power
- Hinesburg Community Resource Center
- Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership
- Hunger Mountain Co-op
- Intervale Community Farm
- Intervale Center
- Keurig Green Mountain
- Lamoille County Conservation District
- Lund Family Center
- Maple Wind Farm
- Montpelier Food Pantry
- National Life Group

- National Park Service
- NOFA-VT
- North Country High School
- North County Hospital
- Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital
- Owl Head Farm
- Pitchfork Farm
- ReSOURCE
- Richmond Family Medicine
- Saint Michael's College
- Salvation Farms
- SerVermont
- Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
- Spectrum Youth and Family Services
- Sports Trails of Ascutney Basin
- The Nature Conservancy
- Town of Chittenden
- Town of Colchester
- Town of Dorset
- Town of Georgia
- Town of Hinesburg
- Town of Pownal
- Town of Warren
- Town of Williston

- United States Forest Service
- United Way
- University of Vermont Medical Center
- Upper Missisquoi and Trout River Wild and Scenic Committee
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- UVM Extension
- UVM Farmer Training Program
- Vermont Audubon - Rutland Chapter
- Vermont Common School
- Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
- Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
- Vermont Foodbank
- Vermont Gleaning Collective
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
- Waterbury Area Food Shelf
- White Mountain Trail Collective
- White River Partnership
- Williston Community Food Shelf
- Winooski High School
- Yates Orchard

Supporters - Thank you for providing powerful experiences to youth. Thank you for strengthening Vermont communities. Thank you for supporting critical conservation projects. Thank you for increasing food security. We are grateful for you.

GIFTS GREATER THAN \$20K

- Anonymous (2)
- Alcyon Foundation
- Canaday Family Charitable Trust
- The Central Vermont Medical Center Community
- Champlain Investment Partners, LLC
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- Peter Swift & Diana McCargo

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A meaningful way to honor, celebrate, or remember: VYCC sends personal acknowledgment to the individual or family identified by the donor. Contributions were made in honor or in memory of the individuals listed in bold by donors listed below them in italics.

IN HONOR OF

- **Anne Adler**
*Charles and Marna Davis
Thomas Mendell*
- **Blake Whitman**
Susan Whitman
- **Bob Coates**
Sarah Carter
- **Breck Knauft**
Marcia and Bruce Fowle
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Radetta Nemcosky
- **Libby Mills**
*Stephen Anderson and
Jacquelyn Walker*
- **Mara Pulgram**
Kelli Murray and Laurence Pulgram
- **Our neighbor, Lou, a true Vermonter**
Madeleine and George Weedon
- **The Mount Mansfield VT 1978 Crew**
Mary and Thom Richards
- **Tom Hark**
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- **Vivian Moore**
Anonymous

IN MEMORY OF

- **Arianna Lynch**
Jeffrey and Susan Lynch
- **Barbara K. Rodes**
Tom Rodes
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Natalie Hall
- **Florence Vodraska**
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GIFTS GREATER THAN \$5K

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