

THE IMPACT OF THE VYCC

Health Care Share



VERMONT
YOUTH
CONSERVATION
CORPS



VYCC Corps Members tend to fields on our farm in Richmond, VT.

What is the Health Care Share?

The Health Care Share at VYCC connects Vermonters with fresh, local food through their health care provider. We partner with medical centers to identify and enroll patients experiencing food insecurity and/or diet-related illness. Each week, households pick up a hearty box full of vegetables at their doctor's office. Sometimes shares include meat, eggs, and local products like cheese and flour. The program is funded by medical centers, VYCC farm stand sales, sponsoring businesses, and generous community support.

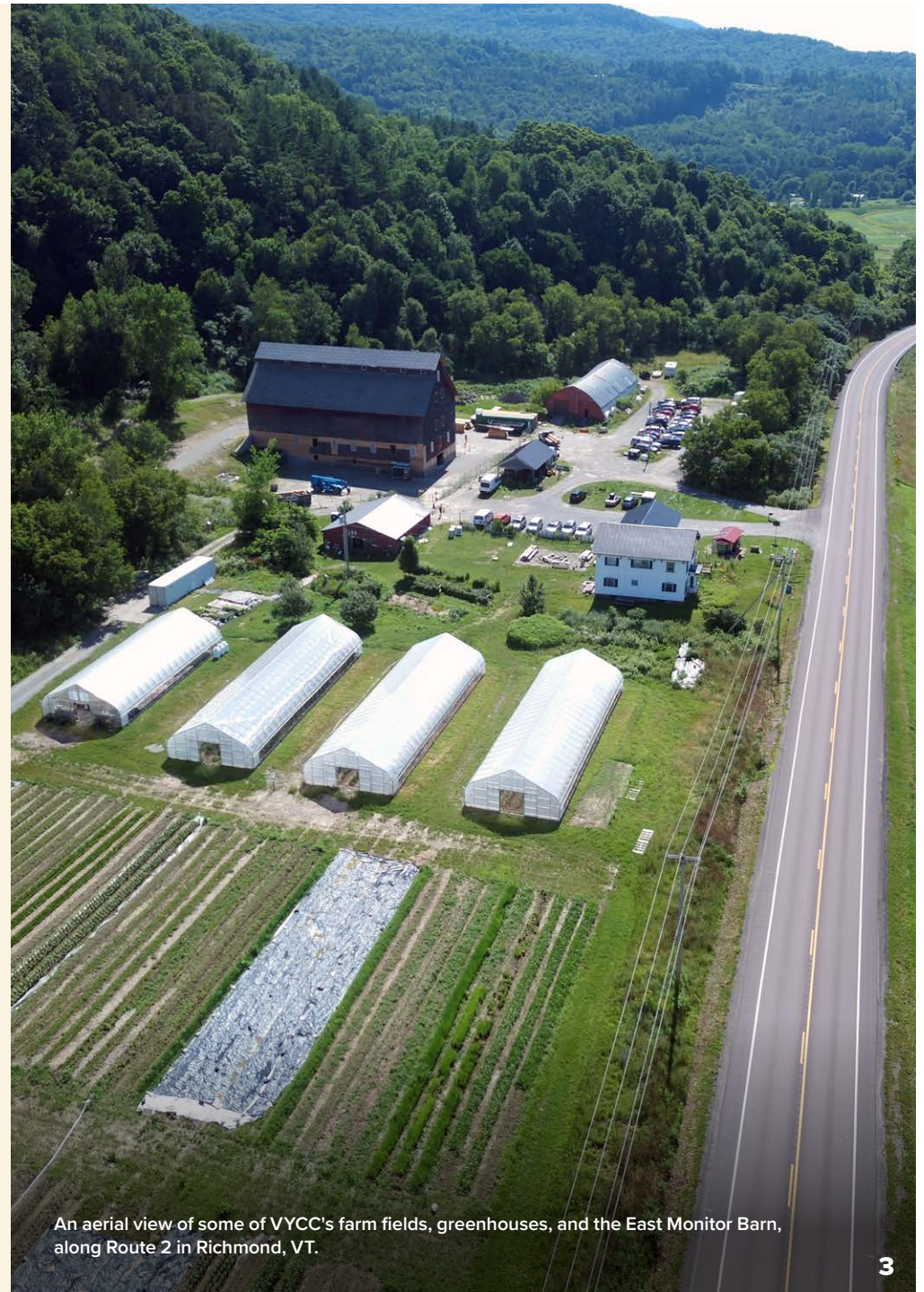
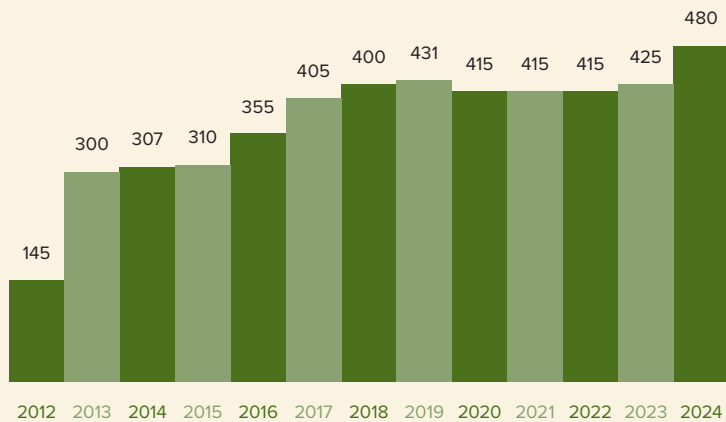
VYCC's Health Care Share is the largest prescription vegetable program in Vermont.



More families, more farm-fresh produce

Since the Health Care Share began in 2012, we've steadily increased the amount of fresh, organic food produced on our farm, allowing us to have greater program impact every year.

HEALTH CARE SHARE PARTICIPANT HOUSEHOLDS



An aerial view of some of VYCC's farm fields, greenhouses, and the East Monitor Barn, along Route 2 in Richmond, VT.

Working together

In 2023, we worked with 10 partners in five counties to identify participants and distribute Health Care Shares:

Abenaki Helping Abenaki

Central Vermont Medical Center

Community Health Centers of Burlington

North Country Hospital

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital

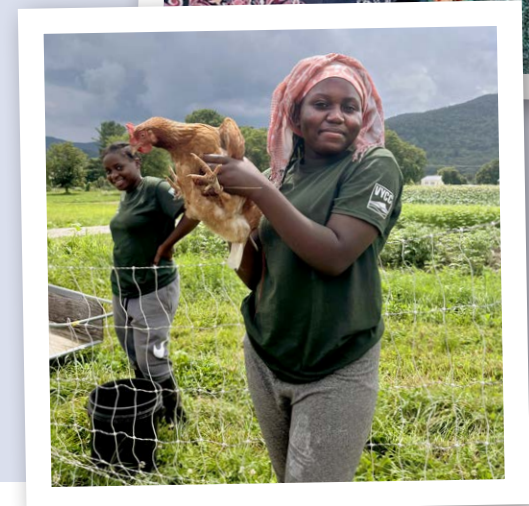
Plainfield Health Center

Richmond Family Medicine

SASH: Support and Services at Home

Second Spring

Veterans Affairs



Exploring program outcomes

To better understand the Health Care Share's impact on the people who grow and receive the food, we recruited **Green Mountain Evaluation** to evaluate the program's process and outcomes. The study and resulting report are based on data from 2023 and interviews with Health Care Share participants, program partners, and VYCC Corps Members. The evaluation was funded by **SerVermont**.

The following pages capture some of the outcomes unearthed through this evaluation.



VYCC Corps Members harvest an abundance of winter squash.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health Care Share Evaluation Results

This study re-affirmed anecdotal evidence that Health Care Shares increase access to, and appreciation of, fresh and healthy foods for everyone involved.

425

HCS PARTICIPANTS & THEIR FAMILIES

received produce, poultry, eggs, and value-added products through the program

SHARE PARTICIPANTS

enjoyed greater food security, eating healthier, trying new foods, and strengthening social connections.



CORPS MEMBERS

learned a lot about farming, food, and nutrition through experiences that may shape their future careers and habits.

Approximately

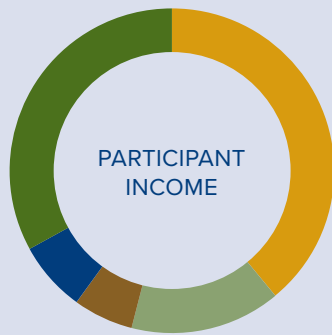
68,000

POUNDS OF FRESH PRODUCE

grown on site and delivered by VYCC to Vermonters experiencing food insecurity or diet-related health conditions

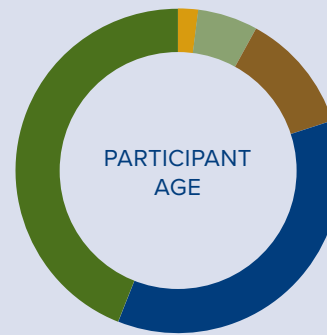
Participant snapshot

Here's a little bit about the individuals and families who took part in the Health Care Share program.



Most participants had household income levels **below \$40,000** per year

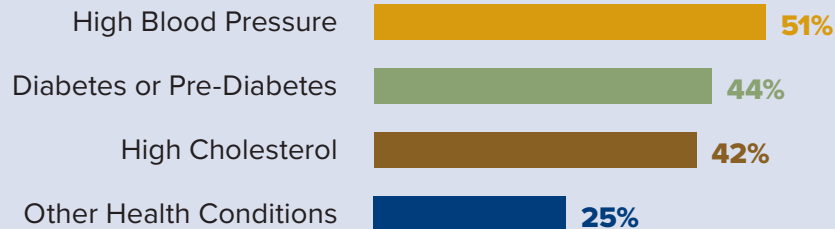
- **39%** Less than \$20,000
- **15%** \$20,000 – \$30,000
- **6%** \$30,000 – \$40,000
- **7%** \$40,000 or more
- **33%** Prefer not to answer



The majority of HCS participants were **over 50 years old**

- **1%** 18-24
- **6%** 25-34
- **12%** 34-49
- **36%** 50-64
- **44%** 65+

The majority of HCS participants (79%) had **one or more diet-related health condition**



PARTICIPANT HEALTH CONDITIONS

51% of participating families had household members **aged 65+**

21% of participating families **had children**

Health Care Shares deliver life-changing benefits

For the households that participated in the Health Care Share, the program delivered more than just something to eat. It opened up new opportunities to incorporate fresh, organic ingredients for improved food security, confidence, and health.

Increased access to fresh produce

Many participants noted that HCS provided **access to high-quality, fresh produce** they could not afford or access otherwise.

“[With HCS], I get this beautiful fresh produce that I wouldn’t be able to afford on my own, and it’s so much better quality than what I could find in the stores.”

— HCS Participant



Increase in food security

38% of participants reported an **increase in food security** after receiving Health Care Shares.

Improved dietary behaviors

85% of participants reported **eating more fresh vegetables**.

83% indicated they **cooked more with fresh produce** after participating in HCS.

“I like how I can try things [from my HCS] and figure out what I do and don’t like. Have that low-risk option for trying something new where you don’t have to shell out a lot at the grocery store.”

— HCS Participant

Increased confidence in healthy eating

87% of participants felt more confident in their ability to **eat healthy foods**.

82% felt more confident **cooking with healthy foods**.

Stronger social connections

The program **strengthened social connections for both volunteers and participants**. HCS provided regular social connections and interactions for participants who may feel isolated.

“For our seniors, sometimes I might be the only person they’ve seen in a week. So, it’s more than just veggies.”

— HCS Partner

VYCC Corps Members grow, too

In addition to the benefits HCS participants experienced, the VYCC Corps Members who planted, tended, harvested, and packed the fresh produce, eggs, and meat into Health Care Shares—and received a share themselves—were also positively impacted by the program.

17 AmeriCorps*
Leaders

25 AmeriCorps*
Corps Members

27 High-school Age
Corps Members

Increased skills and knowledge

Corps Members reported **increased knowledge and skills** related to food, reducing food waste, nutrition, and farming.

100% of Members who were interviewed expressed interest in **growing their own food** in the future.

Greater appreciation for fresh, organic produce

“I think before this I had honestly not eaten a lot of organic vegetables and I think just this has just blown me away at what things are supposed to taste like and just how delicious it really is.”

– Corps Member

Inspired career and educational interests and goals

The program influenced Corps Members’ career and educational goals, with many expressing an interest in finding jobs or pursuing education that would allow them to continue to **focus on agriculture, food systems, sustainability, or working with youth.**

*Corps Members who participated in this study were all AmeriCorps Members.





Paid service strengthens skills and communities

While many young people have to choose between a paying job or an unpaid internship for experience, Corps Members earn a wage while gaining skills—no special tools or experience required. This not only levels the playing field for these future farmers and food stewards, it also empowers them to bring knowledge back to their families and Vermont communities.

In addition to pay, depending on their role, Corps Members also receive:

- **A Health Care Share** of their own to cook at home
- **College credits**
- **AmeriCorps Segal Education Award**, which can be used to pay for college loans and expenses or additional training and certifications

A closer look at “food security”

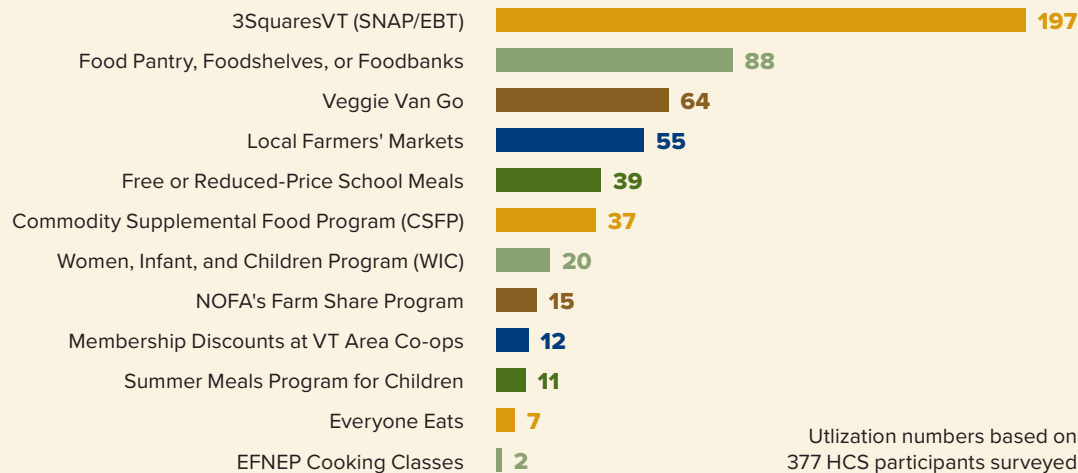
This evaluation uncovered a conversation program partners are having about food security and nutrition security. Food security is typically measured by the quantity of food available and leaves out the quality of food a person can access. Many HCS participants utilize multiple food assistance programs and social services to avoid running out of food. They also recognize that contents of the Health Care Share are more fresh and of higher quality than other sources, which ensures better **nutrition security**. Quality *and* quantity are important when considering strategies for community health and food security.

“Maybe it’s a matter of making clear to the providers that we’re not just talking about food security – do they have enough to eat? – but nutrition security. Do they have access to fruits and vegetables specifically, and those healthier, sometimes more expensive foods?”

– HCS Partner

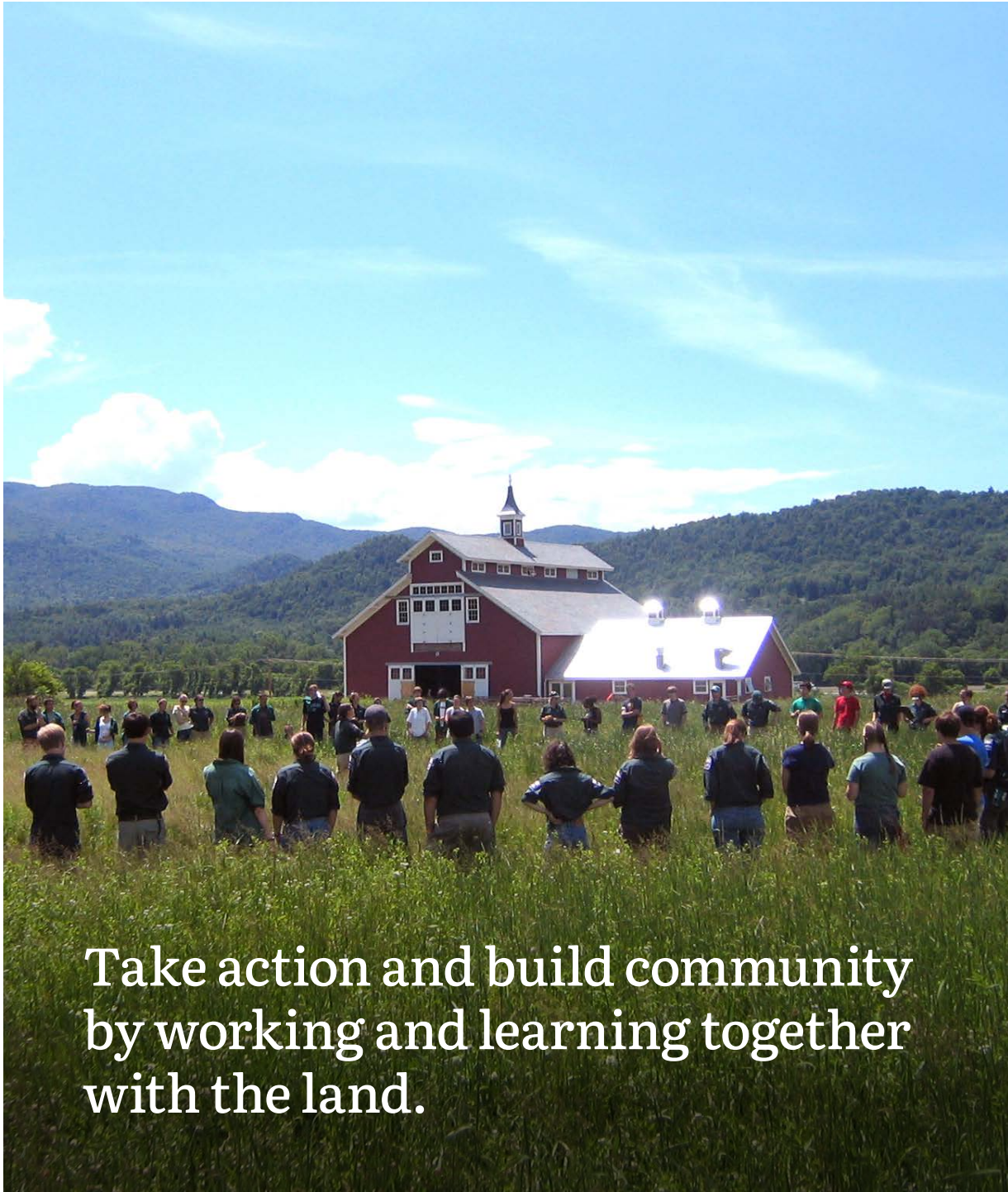


ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANT FOOD PROGRAMS & SOURCES



“[Some] people are not going to show up as food insecure because they’re working hard with all of the resources to make sure they aren’t.”

– HCS Partner



Take action and build community
by working and learning together
with the land.

Living the VYCC mission

Like VYCC's Conservation Program, the Health Care Share is a project Corps Members complete to benefit the community and to develop workforce and life skills that prepare them for careers in sustainable agriculture and food systems, education, and public health.

**Find out more about
VYCC's Food & Farm Program,
including Health Care Shares:**



vycc.org/farm



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