



VERMONT
YOUTH
CONSERVATION
CORPS

2025

IMPACT REPORT



“ Five months of collaboration, shared experiences, tenting and cooking together, felling trees and chainsaw maintenance, and much more has passed our Advanced Forestry Crew. Crew members now know how to run a chainsaw. They can look at a tree, and then safely bring it to the ground. I observed a crew that has seen many ups and downs, been challenged, learned, and grew in meaningful ways. ”

— Saoirse Rain, VYCC Forestry Project Supervisor



STRENGTH IN SERVICE

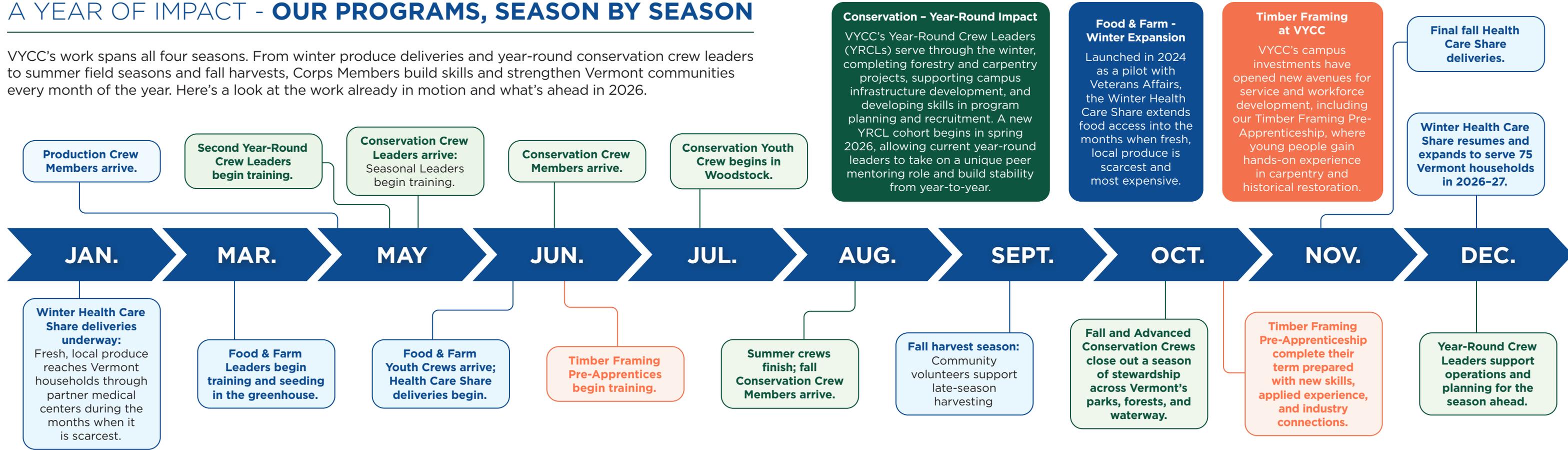
As we reflect on 2025, we are proud of what VYCC Corps Members accomplished across Vermont. From restoring trails and managing forests to growing nutritious food and building community, this year’s participants rose to meet every challenge with energy, skill, and purpose.

The Communication Log entry on the left was submitted at the conclusion of our Advanced Forestry Crew’s season. For 19 weeks this crew worked across the state from Burlington to Woodstock to Braintree and beyond, supporting healthy crop tree growth and reducing invasive vegetation to strength the resilience of Vermont’s forests. Saoirse’s reflections on both the technical and personal growth of Corps Members echo many themes that run through our programs. Corps Members arrive ready to invest in the work, not only rising to the challenges of conservation, farming, and the trades but actively seeking them out. We are so proud to share with you the impact they made across Vermont in 2025!

To the supporters of VYCC, thank you. Whether you are a Corps Member who did the work, a family member who cheered them on, a project partner who collaborated with us, or a donor who made it all possible, your commitment to our mission truly matters. Because of you, young people have had opportunities to take action and build community by working and learning together with the land. Here’s to another year of service, together.

A YEAR OF IMPACT - OUR PROGRAMS, SEASON BY SEASON

VYCC's work spans all four seasons. From winter produce deliveries and year-round conservation crew leaders to summer field seasons and fall harvests, Corps Members build skills and strengthen Vermont communities every month of the year. Here's a look at the work already in motion and what's ahead in 2026.



2025 BY THE NUMBERS

 <p>72,960 hours of service</p>	 <p>\$1,175,795 in Corps Member wages and stipends earned</p>
 <p>336 college credits earned</p>	 <p>57 professional certifications awarded</p>
 <p>636 Corps Members, volunteers, and school groups engaged</p>	



CORPS MEMBERS...

 <p>Removed 87,000 invasive water chestnut and planted 212 native plants</p>	 <p>Grew 59,500 pounds of fresh organic food</p>
 <p>Built and repaired 10.5 miles of trails</p>	 <p>Distributed Health Care Shares to 460 households each week</p>
 <p>Worked with 13 community partners to distribute Health Care Shares</p>	 <p>Built 44 public structures</p>
	 <p>Served 60 veteran households through the Winter Health Care Share</p>



Thank you to our service partners for their continued support and collaboration!

FOOD & FARM

The work of our Food & Farm participants nourishes our neighbors while strengthening Vermont’s locally sourced food systems; the interconnected processes and infrastructure that move food from farm to fork. Our team has been deeply engaged at every step of this system, from production and processing to transportation, distribution, and education that supports healthy food access and consumption.

In 2025, 75 Corps Members gained hands-on experience in organic farming and sustainable food systems, growing their knowledge and abilities as they supported local community members. As one Food & Farm participant reflected, ***“I think the most important thing I learned was building a community within the world of food systems and food production. Learning about the broader food systems across the state and local area has been amazing.”***

Through the Health Care Share, we delivered weekly shares of produce to over 460 vulnerable households experiencing food insecurity and diet-



related illness, supporting their access to healthy food and their ability to participate in Vermont’s local food economy. As one 2025 HCS Recipient shared ***“I always feel healthier during the months that I receive the Health Care Share. My energy is better. My outlook is better. My digestive system works so much better during those months.”***

PEARL: PLANTING ROOTS IN VERMONT

Pearl Benjamin returned to VYCC in 2025 as a Production Crew Leader after first joining in 2024 as a Summer Crew Leader and discovering how much she valued the experience. **VYCC offered Pearl exactly what she was seeking: meaningful, community-based work paired with hands-on agricultural training to support her pursuit of a farming career in Vermont.**

As a Production Crew Leader, Pearl built an impressive range of technical skills. She gained experience in tractor operation, tomato pruning and trellising, direct seeding, flame weeding, and backpack spraying. She also developed critical leadership and communication skills, including how to manage a crew, collaborate effectively, and create an environment where others could thrive. Throughout the season, Pearl fostered a learning environment by encouraging crew members to ask questions, solve problems, and build confidence.

Now, as she transitions into a career in production farming here in Vermont, Pearl carries those lessons forward. She chose to stay in the state because she wants to continue to contribute to an inspiring food system led by farming experts. ***“I know I have a lot more learning to do when it comes to agriculture, and I think there’s no better place to do it than here.”*** With her dedication to growth, leadership, and community, Pearl is well on her way to cultivating not just crops, but a meaningful career in Vermont agriculture.



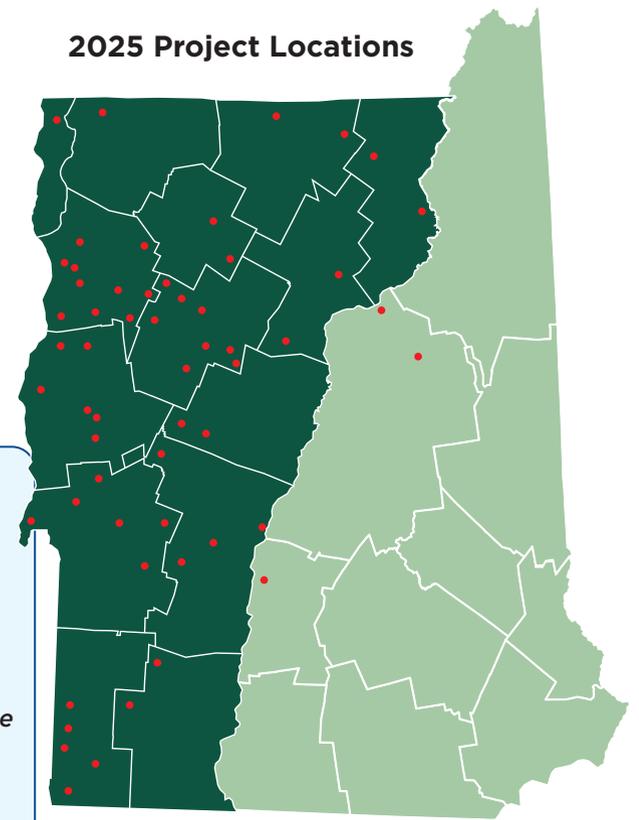
CONSERVATION

In 2025, Corps Members worked in places you would expect to find a VYCC crew, like Gifford Woods State Park in Killington, improving trail infrastructure. They were also in some unexpected places, like the basement crawlspace of a home in Morgan, helping to restabilize a foundation damaged by flooding. Crews crossed state lines to remove invasive vegetation along the shores of Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga and restored trails at the summit of Mt. Lafayette in the Franconia Notch. **Across all locations, our crews brought grit and hard work to demanding projects that strengthened both Vermont and our neighboring states.**

Commensurate with the breadth of our crews' impact is the depth of their skill development. Conservation Crew members leave their season at VYCC with skills and industry-recognized credentials, helpful for pursuing careers in conservation, forestry, and the trades. Across our 2025 Conservation Program, participants earned a collective 42 certifications, including Wilderness First Aid, Game of Logging, and Flatwater Kayak Safety & Rescue.

“ VYCC has tested my strength, stamina, dedication towards the work, and I have left the season stronger both physically and mentally. VYCC has continued to be my outlet to do good, make a tangible difference on the land, and make myself proud. ”
— 2025 Advanced Trails Crew Member

2025 Project Locations



HOLDEN: VERMONT GROWN LEADERSHIP

Holden Middleton long knew about VYCC growing up in Vermont, but his interest solidified after working alongside VYCC alumni on the Burlington Parks and Recreation conservation team. With an interest in forestry and hopes of one day becoming a National Park Service ranger, VYCC felt like the right next step in his professional journey.

While stepping into a leadership role was challenging at first, the strong sense of community quickly stood out for Holden. ***“I was nervous to take on this challenge and questioned if I was prepared and had what it takes. As the season went on my doubts evaporated as my crew and I tackled every project and issue we were faced with and all in good spirits as we did it.”*** Surrounded by peers also passionate about conservation, leading a crew became an uplifting and growth-filled experience.

Through VYCC, he strengthened his communication, organization, and time management skills while building meaningful connections across the state. **Holden will return to serve as a Year-Round Crew Leader at VYCC starting in May, giving him an opportunity to deepen his leadership skills and improve his technical conservation abilities here in Vermont.**

Holden's journey reflects the powerful impact of VYCC: cultivating confident leaders while strengthening Vermont's natural landscapes and communities.



TIMBER FRAMING PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

Launched in 2024, VYCC's new Timber Framing Pre-Apprenticeship program trains young adults in traditional craftsmanship and building methods that are central to Vermont's architectural heritage. Under the tutelage of experienced timber framers, participants gain hands-on work experience supporting career pathways in historic building preservation and traditional timber-framing techniques, an opportunity one 2025 Crew Member described as unmatched: ***"I came to VYCC because there is no other timber framing program like it in the country. Nowhere else can you get paid to learn timber framing in a crew-based apprenticeship setting with a focus on historic restoration."***

In summer 2025, our four-member Timber Frame Crew built a five bay compost facility, the frame of a three-season cabin, and completed restoration work on a historic horse barn, all on VYCC's campus. Building on these successes, VYCC extended the program season, partnering with the Agency of Natural Resources to dismantle a historic barn at Cadys Falls Nursery in Morrisville. This year, the Timber Framing Pre-Apprenticeship will broaden its curriculum, adding more conventional and finish carpentry skills as the crew works together to construct six cabins from the ground up.



EXPANDING INFRASTRUCTURE



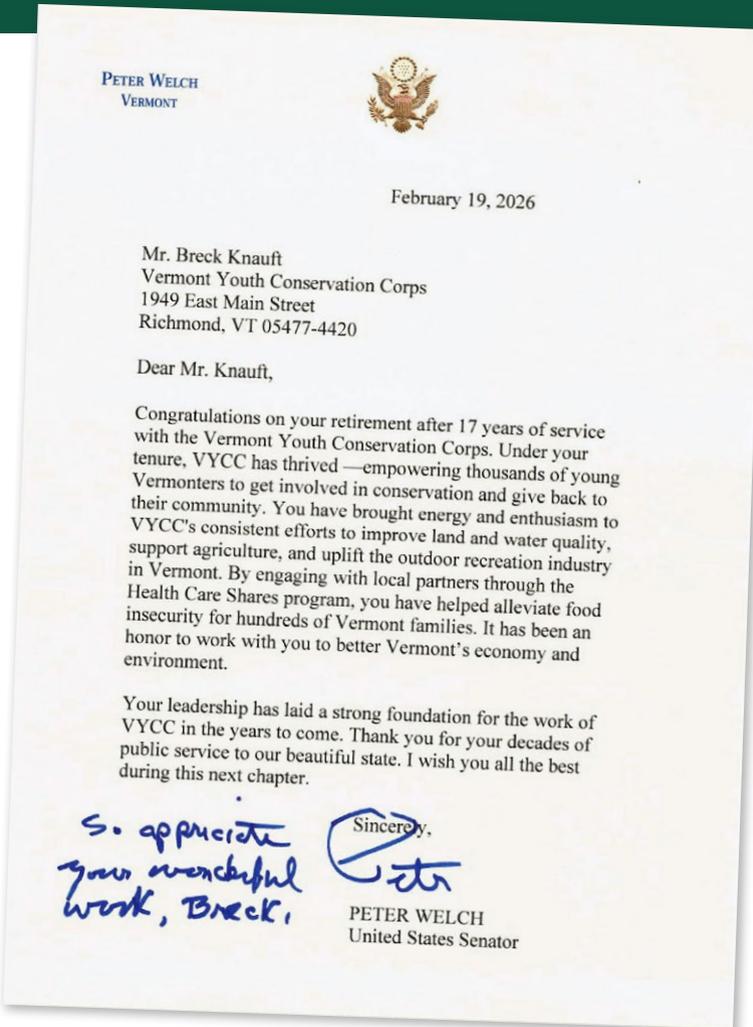
Ongoing investments in our campus infrastructure are already improving efficiencies, strengthening current programs, and creating new opportunities. A new hoop house constructed by VYCC staff and Farm Leaders has expanded growing capacity and extended the season. Renovations to our on-campus farmhouse have enhanced both resident living conditions and energy efficiency. A compost structure built by the 2025 Timber Frame crew is strengthening long-term sustainability by improving soil health while creating valuable educational and workforce development opportunities in compost production and application. **Multi-year restoration of the East Monitor Barn is preparing us to undertake a new chapter in workforce development.**

Our 2026 Timber Frame crew will focus on building six cabins to provide three-season housing for Corps Members, along with an outdoor kitchen. Creating dedicated on-campus housing will strengthen recruitment and make the program more accessible to Vermonters from across the state, including southern regions, as well as participants from out of state.

CELEBRATING BRECK'S LEADERSHIP



After 17 years of dedicated service, our longtime Executive Director, Breck Knauft, is stepping away from VYCC. **He leaves a remarkable legacy, and under his leadership, VYCC is stronger and forever shaped for the better.** We know Breck will continue to make meaningful contributions to Vermont, and countless members of our community deeply appreciate all he has done.



THANK YOU

As we celebrate our accomplishments in 2025, we recognize that the work ahead is just as important as the work behind us. **VYCC's ability to invest in youth, care for Vermont's landscapes, and strengthen the connection between people and place relies on the generosity of a community that shares this vision.** There are many ways to get involved: you can donate, partner with us, spread the word about our work, or join us in service. Every contribution, in whatever form, helps ensure this program endures for the young people who need it most. We invite you to be part of what comes next, and we thank you for your support!

The team at VYCC extends heartfelt thanks to Corps Members, project partners, and our incredible community of supporters. Thank you for making our programs possible. Visit www.vycc.org/news to see this report with a list of our 2025 program sponsors.

SCAN HERE TO GIVE NOW!



PROGRAM SPONSORS

Thank you to our partner companies who sponsored our 2025 Food & Farm and Conservation programs. Your support makes this work and its impact possible.

	 City Market Union River Co-op		 FLOOD FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.			
						

