

CAPSTONE

COMMUNITY ACTION



ANNUAL REPORT

The Unforgettable Year

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



One of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s overriding legacies was his commitment to leaving no one behind. Over the past 56 years, Capstone Community Action has steadfastly embraced this mission by working to improve the lives of Vermonters in their most vulnerable moments.

2020 was a year like none other. In spite of the ongoing pandemic and economic crisis – and in some ways, because of them – Capstone rose to the extraordinary challenges our participants and communities have faced. Our staff made history by serving 10,624 Vermonters in the face of unprecedented needs, uncertainties, fears, and daily struggles. Our success was due to the exemplary dedication of our team and our ability to act quickly, be flexible, collaborate, and never stray from our mission.

As we turn the page to 2021, we know our challenges have not been overcome. We will continue our commitment to those facing the ongoing pandemic and economic crises that continue to sweep across our nation. We will also sustain and grow our priority to address the legacy of racial injustice and systemic racism in our country.

At Capstone, it is our job to raise awareness of ongoing social and economic disparities as well as to highlight the tremendous potential of all who struggle and lack resources, opportunity, and the confidence to believe in themselves. In this unforgettable year, our commitment stood strong due to the outpouring of support we received from our community. I thank all of our friends who gave generously, volunteered, and partnered with us in a variety of ways to ensure no Vermonter was left behind without the hope, dignity, and empowerment to thrive through our recovery from these extraordinary times.

Sue Minter, Executive Director

OUR IMPACT »

Our work has a direct and vital impact in central Vermont in numerous ways:

10,624

Individual Vermonters were served in FY2019-2020

6,166

Central Vermont households were served in FY2019-2020

602

Children received nutritious meals from 60 childcare providers through the Child Care Food Program

3,243

Vermonters fed through our food shelf

2,225

Beneficiaries of heating assistance

\$1,924,940

In tax refunds for low-income households resulting from tax preparation assistance

337

Children prepared for school through Head Start

22

Graduates of our Community Kitchen Academy

131

Homes weatherized

227

People assisted with counseling to access stable and safe housing



2020 Highlights

**Making a difference
in the lives of Vermonters**

The Community Action Promise: *Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

In the Face of Adversity: COVID-19

The March lockdown abruptly halted “mission as usual” at Capstone Community Action. Every program was faced with the sudden loss of our ability to provide services. In a remarkable effort to ensure access to essential services, virtually every system and support had to redesign itself for the new pandemic landscape.

Although the Community Kitchen Academy classes had to pause, we immediately repurposed our CKA into a mass feeding center preparing 25,000 meals for the homeless neighbors being housed in area hotels. When able to re-open the CKA program switched from a 12-week session with multiple students to a 5- week program with five students and additional sessions. These rotations ensured a continued robust training experience while adhering to COVID safety rules. This re-design allowed the chef instructors to continue to teach the skills, professionalism, critical thinking, organization and time management, life skills and confidence our students require for employment success.

Head Start tackled the monumental task of converting our early education programs to virtual and outdoor visits. Teachers connected with families remotely and made weekly deliveries to each enrolled family with boxes of healthy food and educational activities for their children.

Our housing staff became focused not only on preventing homelessness for families facing eviction, they worked with partner agencies to provide food, medical and mental

health support, as well as safety and security for the guests at area hotels that were previously homeless.

Each one of Capstone’s services and programs made adaptations to ensure the health and safety of staff and the greater central Vermont community. Throughout the year and still today, staff continue to deliver Capstone’s mission with dignity, hope and empowerment in the face of adversity. Learn more about our COVID response on page 6.

Transportation and Climate Work

Capstone launched the MileageSmart program, which assists low income Vermonters in the purchase of high-efficiency pre-owned vehicles through state incentives. The awarded funds from the Agency of Transportation provides subsidies for eligible Vermonters.

In October, Capstone was awarded the Arthur and Anne Berndt Award by the Energy Action Network for energy equity work through the Weatherization and Climate Impact programs. Capstone’s Executive Director, Sue Minter, will continue Capstone’s climate leadership role as a new appointee to the Vermont State Climate Council, advocating for justice and equity in climate policy development.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Community Action movement is deeply rooted in the Civil Rights movement and the fight for justice and equity. Since the murder of George Floyd, Capstone has reflected on our responsibility to further racial justice. Capstone staff formed its own Task Force for racial diversity, equity and inclusion. As part of our statewide partnership of Community Action agencies, staff and leadership attended trainings designed to increase our knowledge of strategies to combat systemic racism.



Photo Credit: Vermont Foodbank

Cooking Up a Caring Career

Amanda arrived at Capstone homeless and hungry, yet hopeful. Resolved to transform her life, she enrolled in the Community Kitchen Academy (CKA), which taught her the culinary and job skills she needed for employment.

Through the next year, she worked hard and graduated, but the pandemic provided yet one more roadblock to employment. Undeterred, Amanda volunteered her time and helped Chef Joey to prepare meals for homeless families and adults. Over the summer and fall of 2020, she helped Capstone's Food Shelf to produce 25,000 meals for housebound and isolated Vermonters. Inspired and connected, Amanda's dedication earned her a paying job at Capstone's Food Shelf. She takes great pride in her new profession and serving the mission that gave her a hand up when she needed it the most.

"I know what it's like to be homeless and hungry," Amanda explains. "It's a good feeling to know you can go to our Food Shelf and get the help you need. **Working at the Food Shelf helps me feel like I am doing some good in the world.**"

Making Dreams Come True

Malynda came to Capstone deep in financial crisis. Her unpaid bills left her precariously housed and constantly stressed.

Determined to achieve financial security, she worked diligently with Money Coach Mary Johnson to build her credit and budget her money. Three years later, Malynda has achieved her goal. She has a checking and savings account, pays bills on time and in full. She is proud of her emergency savings account, and has the dream of saving to buy a house for her family. Her newfound confidence helped her enroll in classes, working toward an Associate's Degree.

With Mary's support, she got her first loan, increasing her credit score, and is back in an apartment with her fiancé, and four children. This year Malynda celebrated one year at her job, was promoted to manager, and received her first raise.



"Family is everything, and I've worked on myself to help them. I couldn't have done it without Mary's help." – Malynda



A Fresh Financial Start

Five years ago, John arrived at Capstone with his future and his financial security in jeopardy. He was saddled with credit card debt, no retirement savings and a non-working car. Nearing middle age, in debt and struggling financially, he knew he needed help. Hearing about Capstone's financial coaching program on the radio, he made the appointment that would change his life.

Today, John has transformed his financial picture. He learned to budget, he paid off his debt and bought a used car. With a new job with benefits, he is saving for retirement. And better yet, in this year of profound economic upheaval, John is confident he has the skills to weather the uncertainties of life in a pandemic.

OUR FINANCIALS »

Statement of Activities Fiscal years ending September 30, 2020 and 2019

REVENUE	2020	2019
Grants and Contracts	\$ 13,825,690	\$ 13,402,609
Donations	863,515	531,257
Fees, rents and other	1,681,477	1,399,599
TOTAL REVENUE	16,370,682	15,333,465
EXPENSES		
PROGRAM SERVICES:		
Housing	130,200	146,372
Head Start and Related	5,457,348	5,308,781
Family and Community Support Services	1,673,924	1,980,219
Community Economic Development	1,695,592	1,338,679
Weatherization	4,274,803	4,206,808
Workforce Development	185,780	193,011
Transportation Project	66,196	1,145
Community Services	422,105	67,811
Plant Fund	(131,547)	66,171
Total Program Services	13,774,401	13,308,997
SUPPORT SERVICES:		
Fundraising	65,863	39,074
General and Administrative	1,930,081	1,731,316
TOTAL EXPENSES	15,770,345	15,079,387
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 600,337	\$ 254,078

A complete set of our audited financial statements is available at our office:

20 Gable Place
Barre, Vermont



Persevering

Amidst a challenge of pandemic proportions

Capstone Community Action rose to the challenge of the COVID crisis. Employees changed how and where they worked, offering services in creative and innovative ways to address the needs of vulnerable Vermonters. From establishing incident command centers to providing meals to the housebound, secure housing for the homeless, and support for struggling business owners, we persevered. Capstone never closed, but forged ahead to keep Vermonters safe, warm and healthy through this unprecedented time.

Everyone Eats!

The effects of the pandemic on food security were swift and significant. Almost overnight, Capstone had to focus on ensuring healthy food was accessible to homebound families.

Partnering with the Skinny Pancake's Shift Meals program, Capstone developed a Central Vermont Food Hub for the Everyone Eats program. From September to December of 2020, Capstone coordinated over 82,000 meals to pandemic-affected Vermonters in Washington, Lamoille, and Orange Counties. Working with Vermont farmers and restaurants, 37% of the purchased ingredients for the meals were locally produced. This multi-purpose program

fed thousands of Vermonters, sourced food from local farms, and helped sustain local restaurants by investing \$820,010 back into the regional food system economy.



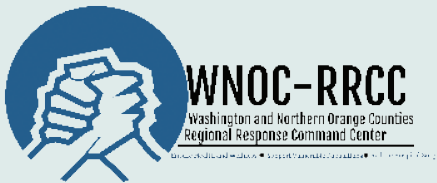
The Central Vermont Food Hub served 1,283 central Vermont households, totaling 3,654 individuals, with 607 of those individuals being over the age of 65.

Eighty-four percent of the participants are food insecure due to the pandemic and face ongoing financial stress. This was all made possible by 39 community partners in the three counties, and six large distribution events in Barre, Johnson and Rochester.

E.M.B.R.A.C.E.

Capstone's Micro Business Development Program supports businesses with five or fewer employees, including the owner. Local business owners who were struggling financially from the impact of the pandemic applied for the **Economic Micro Business Recovery Assistance for the COVID-19 Epidemic (EMBRACE)** funds through Capstone's counselors. These funds were a lifeline for very small businesses who typically were ineligible for other programs. The need was so great for these survival funds, Capstone granted \$379,948 of the designated funds over a few months.

WNOC-RRCC: Washington and Northern Orange Counties Regional Response Command Center



Capstone played a critical leadership role in establishing The Washington and Northern Orange Counties Regional Response Command Center (WNOC-RRCC), providing staffing and in-kind resources to the effort.

This work included repurposing our Community Kitchen Academy into a mass feeding center, preparing **25,000 meals for over 300 previously homeless guests in 7 area hotels**. Our mobilization was also a critical factor in **volunteers distributing over 81,000 meals** over six months prior to Everyone Eats. Our food shelf transformed into a distribution center for face masks and hand sanitizer.

LAH2S-RCC: Lamoille Area Health and Human Services Response Command Center

Capstone remains a leader in the Lamoille Area Health and Human Services Response Command Center, a county-level response to assist the coordination and implementation of local efforts during the pandemic. Capstone collaborated on community initiatives to distribute food, fund cell phones and hot spots for students in need of remote access, and established a Community Fund for acute needs. **This fund has supported the basic needs of 177 Lamoille County households (470 individuals)** from April to December 2020.



Orange County

In Orange County, Capstone collaborated in regional efforts for distributing food and resources. The **Quin-Town Response Team** provided multiple food outreach efforts, along with support for a new nonprofit called Feeding the Valley Alliance, which brought food security to the Rochester area. Through the **Randolph Area Mutual Aid Network (RAMAN)** over 300 backpacks with school supplies were distributed to the Orange Southwest School District. Holiday assistance supported 113 children in 38 families served by the same district. Both groups successfully distributed several thousand face masks in the region. The Randolph Community Suppers continued in September with a new take-out format, and a winter clothing distribution event was held for community members, with safety protocols in place.



20 Gable Place, Barre, Vermont 05641

802.479.1053 / 800.639.1053

www.capstonevt.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
BURLINGTON, VT
Permit No. 165



Cover photo credits, counter-clockwise from left: 1) Elliot Burg, 2) VTDigger, and 3) Vermont Foodbank.

Thank You to Our Donor Heroes!

Capstone's success and vision of a community free from poverty is only made possible through philanthropy. To request a list of our generous donors, please contact Morgan at mbrown@capstonevt.org

Capstone Board of Directors 2020-21

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Steven Pappas – <i>Chair</i> | Barbara Miller |
| Rubin Bennett – <i>Past Chair</i> | Janet Murray |
| Karen Lowry Reed – <i>Vice Chair</i> | Jessica Paynter |
| Hope Crifo – <i>Treasurer</i> | Donna Sherlaw |
| Ronilynn Shrout – <i>Secretary</i> | Kenny Smith |
| Bari Gladstone | John (Jack) Tighe |
| Rep. Jay Hooper | Jon Valsangiacomo |
| Monica McDonald | Abby White |
| Scott McDonald | |

Capstone is uniquely governed by a tripartite board of directors from three community sectors: public, private and participant.

Capstone Community Action is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



OUR VITAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Making ends meet

Food and Nutrition Programs

Home Heating and Utility Assistance

Housing Counseling and Transitional Services

Homelessness Prevention

Building stronger families

Head Start & Early Head Start

Child Care Food Program

Family Literacy Center

Physical, Oral, and Emotional Wellness

Creating warm and healthy homes

Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Services

Energy Efficiency Education

Opening doors to economic opportunity

Community Kitchen Academy

Micro Business Development

Savings & Credit Programs

Tax Preparation Program

Workforce Development

Transportation