



Report to the Community
2019



Shaping the Future of Capstone Community Action



As I reach the one-year milestone serving as Capstone’s Executive Director, I am thrilled to share with you the many highlights of our year in this 2019 Report to the Community.

It has been an exciting year for us: we undertook a Community Needs Assessment and a strategic planning process, even as we continued to serve our neighbors in critical ways. Our “appreciative inquiry” approach helped us “SOAR” — exploring our Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results. This journey has helped us understand our values, and develop strategic initiatives for growing our impact into the future.

My awareness of the importance of our work has paralleled my deepening understanding of the complex and intensifying nature of poverty in our community. Each day I walk through our doors, I am struck by the injustice of my privilege. Every story I hear about the challenges faced by people who live in poverty, I am

dismayed by the inequities embedded in our culture. At the same time, I am continually struck by the resilience of the individuals and families we serve, and I am inspired by their perseverance and their success.

Simply put: Poverty is *not* permanent and a brighter future *is* within reach!

At Capstone, we are committed to improving the lives of Vermonters in need by providing opportunities, education, and vital assistance. Your support helps to break down the barriers that prevent people from thriving, and offer the hope people need, the dignity everyone deserves, and a better community for all.

Together, we can continue to create meaningful change in peoples’ lives and our communities.

Sue Minter, Executive Director

Our impact

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

\$1,903,873

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

1,562

Children accessed healthy meals and snacks

3,256

Vermonters fed through our food shelf

2,971

Beneficiaries of heating assistance

181

Homes weatherized

32

Graduates of our Community Kitchen Academy

218

Entrepreneurs supported to start or expand a business

353

Children prepared for school through Head Start

967

People assisted with counseling to access stable and safe housing

369

Participants in financial literacy, credit & planning programs

Milestones that made a difference

2019 was a year of insight and innovation at Capstone Community Action. We launched several new initiatives that move us forward in our pursuit of improving the lives of low-income Vermonters.



Community Needs Assessment

In September, we released our comprehensive Community Needs Assessment, which analyzed demographic data and over 1,200 survey responses from our service areas: Lamoille, Orange, and Washington counties. Key findings include:

- **Highest identified needs** are housing, transportation, health & mental health care.
- **High rate of child poverty:** 20% of children ages 0-4 live in extreme poverty.
- **Low rate of education attainment:** 37% of our service area has a high school diploma or less.
- **Income inequality:** Low-income females earn \$10K to \$12K less than males per year.
- **High housing demand:** 0.9% residential vacancy rate
- **Rent burden:** In Lamoille County, 1 in 4 renters pay 50% or more of their income for rent. 23% in Orange Co. and 22% in Washington Co. are doing the same.
- **Lamoille County is especially hard hit.** In our service area, it has the lowest media income, highest poverty rate (12%), highest child poverty rate (23%), highest senior poverty rate (9%), highest unemployment rate, and highest number of uninsured Vermonters.

SOAR Appreciative Inquiry Planning

In June, our SOAR Summit capped off a 6-week appreciative inquiry strategic planning process. Over 125 service participants, community partners, board members, and staff took part in this initiative, where core values, key strengths, and opportunities for growth emerged.

Weatherization

Capstone launched a new multi-unit weatherization pilot program, across the state, to improve the energy efficiency and health of affordable housing complexes. This will add 80 to 100 low-income homes to the number that are weatherized each year.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Nearly 8 in 10 kids enrolled in our Head Start program have experienced trauma before age 6. With funding from Katz Amsterdam Charitable Trust, we integrated mental health supports for children and families in our Early Learning Center in Morrisville to address trauma and build resilience. We then replicated this model at our Learning Together Center in Barre. Capstone's Head Start program is leading the effort to address trauma at the pre-school level.

Essentials Closet

Food stamps don't pay for personal care products like soap, toothpaste, shampoo, diapers, and feminine care. With thousands of diapers and feminine care products donated by Seventh Generation, we opened the Essentials Closet at our Morrisville center. Operating like a food shelf, it provides these products to the Lamoille community.

Fuel Your Neighbors

Our 3rd annual Fuel Your Neighbors campaign — a 100-day initiative to raise funds for emergency food and heating assistance during the winter — exceeded its \$100,000 goal. We raised more than \$144,000 thanks to generous community support.

STORIES THAT INSPIRE US

Change Starts When You Believe in Yourself

Cassidy's life changed forever when she found herself unexpectedly pregnant at nineteen. She had no idea how to be a mom, and she was terrified.

Cassidy connected with Capstone's Head Start program, and received weekly visits during pregnancy and after her daughter's birth. She learned about child development, parenting strategies, and how to create structure for her daughter. She worked toward goals for her parenting, education, and career, and connected with Capstone's housing counselor and financial coach to secure stable housing, where she still lives today.

“They believed in me, so I had to believe in myself.”

With new confidence, Cassidy took on a leadership role with Head Start's Policy Council. She was then offered a Head Start Teacher's Assistant position with the option to earn an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education.

Today, Cassidy is a passionate teacher and advocate for her families at our Early Learning Center in Morrisville.



Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

Cassidy in the Dragonfly classroom of our Early Learning Center

“We change lives. I see it every day. I see how getting a kiddo housed changes their trajectory in the classroom. Without these services, they would be lost. I know I was before Capstone.” – Cassidy



Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

Terrance at work as a Banquet Cook at Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa in Stowe.

A Second Chance Leads to New Opportunity

After being incarcerated, Terrance was ready to make a change. He moved to Vermont to find work and create a new life for himself.

His passion for making and selling BBQ sauce sparked a desire to cook, which led him to enroll in the Community Kitchen Academy (CKA), an intensive 12-week culinary training program.

With new skills and confidence, Terrance was hired at Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa. But, Terrance keeps thinking bigger, already enrolling in Community College of Vermont. His eyes are set on owning and operating his own food truck.

“Capstone was like a key to a door that I was trying to get through. They made me see that I can do this. Capstone gives people a way out of difficult situations.” – Terrance

“ In Vermont, you get all the challenges to survive in the cold. People that are low-income have a really hard time. My wife and I are both retired and raising three grandkids. They [Capstone Weatherization] insulated the roof, underneath [the home], put in a bathroom fan, weather-stripped around both doors, replaced all my light bulbs. It’s been a big difference. They said they can save about half what our fuel was from the prior year. I’m believing that to be true. ”

– Delbert,
Weatherization Program Participant



Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

CAPSTONE COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

Statement of Activities Fiscal years ending September 30, 2019 and 2018

REVENUE	2019	2018
Grants and Contracts	\$ 13,402,609	\$ 13,452,195
Donations	531,256	518,293
Fees, rents and other	1,399,600	1,047,104
TOTAL REVENUE	15,333,465	15,017,592
EXPENSES		
PROGRAM SERVICES:		
Housing	146,373	134,372
Head Start and Early Head Start	5,308,780	5,510,563
Family and Community Support Services	1,980,219	1,925,293
Community Economic Development	1,338,679	1,458,319
Weatherization	4,206,808	3,663,456
Workforce Development	193,011	194,821
Transportation Project	1,145	62,913
Community Services	67,810	78,492
Plant Fund	66,170	135,268
Total Program Services	13,308,995	13,163,497
SUPPORT SERVICES:		
Fundraising	39,073	32,168
General and Administrative	1,731,316	1,749,814
TOTAL EXPENSES	15,079,384	14,945,479
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 254,081	\$ 72,113

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

20 Gable Place
Barre, Vermont



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Donations made 10/1/18 - 9/30/19

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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.

“When I needed heating assistance and more food, I could access those services. Capstone truly became my life boat.”

– Viviana, Community Kitchen Academy Graduate

OUR VITAL PROGRAMS AND 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

- Matched Savings & Asset Building Programs
- Community Kitchen Academy
- Micro Business Development
- Savings & Credit Programs
- Tax Preparation Program
- Workforce Development