



# CAPSTONE

COMMUNITY ACTION

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

Melisa Oliva and Family, Ananda Gardens  
Capstone Food Access Partner

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“**Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars.**”

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear Friends,

This year has been a testament to the resilience of Vermonters in the face of adversity. Costs for food, fuel, rent, and other basic needs increased, and historic floods caused devastating damage to homes and businesses. The challenges in our communities along with global unrest have made it hard to see the light around us.

Yet, as Dr. King points out, it is during the darkest days that we must strive to be the light. I am grateful to be a part of the Capstone community where we offer hope for so many through dark times.

In 2023, we responded with urgency and dignity to thousands of Central Vermonters who walked through our doors. We eased access to food, heating and utility assistance, while providing housing, childcare, education, and resources to build financial security. It's a Capstone tradition to ring a bell whenever we find a Vermonter a home. That bell chimed many times over the year.

Capstone has leaned into a future of energy equity with weatherizing homes and coaching people on how to reduce energy costs. We are also deeply committed to safe, affordable, efficient, and reliable transportation access. The launch of a new nonprofit ride service this year continues to transform this belief into action.

Being the light takes working together. The dedication of our donors and staff allowed us to address the greater need we saw across our service area. With a drastic increase in participation at our food shelf, keeping shelves stocked and meals prepared has been essential. This generosity continues to help with essential needs and the multitude of expenses faced by our neighbors.

Thank you for providing that hope.



**Sue Minter**  
Executive Director



## BY THE NUMBERS

**11,492**

Individual Vermonters were served

**213**

Individuals utilized Financial Coaching Services to help them on their path to financial stability

**6,414**

Central Vermont households were served

**2,415**

Central Vermonters were provided meals from our Food Shelf

**\$1,767,700**

In tax refunds to individuals in 1,311 households, prepared by more than 30 VITA volunteers

**20**

Community Kitchen Graduates

**38**

Entrepreneurs launched or expanded their business, creating full time jobs

**1,104**

Children received daily nutritious meals from 107 child care providers through the Child Care Food Program

**60,712**

Meals distributed in Orange, Lamoille, Washington & Caledonia counties by the Vermont Everyone Eats program

**259**

Children birth-to-five received critical early childhood development and education

**16,830**

Meals coordinated by Capstone from Aug. 7 – Oct. 11 as part of Vermont Emergency Eats

**1,885**

Individuals and families stayed warm with emergency heating assistance

**5,805**

Visits to the Capstone Barre Food Shelf

**12**

Pregnant & parenting individuals gained literacy skills through our Brook Street High School



## Transportation and Equity



Making sure people have easy access to dependable transportation options has far-reaching impacts.

Capstone's [MileageSmart](#) program offers incentives up to \$5,000 for high-efficiency vehicles, helping people cut transportation costs and stretch monthly budgets. It has helped Vermonters purchase 359 vehicles this past year.

We also incubated [Gopher](#), a ride service operated by Community Rides VT, which officially launched as its own nonprofit in May 2023. The first 2,000 trips have helped provide folks with essential rides not served by transit, like relocating after July floods, and accessing new jobs, medical appointments, child care and recovery services.

*I am so deeply grateful for this program. This car will make my life easier, my travels safe and less expensive, as I commute daily to work and monthly to visit my family in Maine.*

*MileageSmart customer*

# Local Food & Valued Partnerships



We believe a strong community includes all people having easy access to nutritious food.

Being in Vermont, we are surrounded by incredible farms and producers. There are many ways our food access team works to secure local vegetables, meat, and dairy for our community. Yet, it is not always easy to obtain or keep costs within budget.

For the past year, we have invested over \$17,000 with three area farms, thanks to a nationwide program aimed at increasing access to local food. Our partnerships focus on farms owned and operated by socially disadvantaged community members: [Khelcom Farm](#) in Barre, [Union Brook Farm](#) in Northfield, and [Ananda Gardens](#) in Montpelier.

Fresh vegetables were delivered through the growing season and local chickens roasted in-house, ready as grab-and-go family meals. These high-quality products have been priceless and popular as food shelf offerings. Additionally, they have boosted prepared meal components made by the [Community Kitchen Academy](#), and filled veggie bags for families via our [Child Care Food Program](#).

This work connects the dots between multiple services and our community food system, with clearly positive results. It was made possible by funding from the Local Food Purchase Assistance, a USDA Cooperative Agreement Program administered by the [Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets](#). Investment in local food is an investment in community resilience. It affects social determinants of health and strengthens our local economies. It is also just plain good for people. When we all have access to local food, we all benefit.



*Working with Capstone Community Action has not only benefited us as a new black-owned business through sales, it has also helped us fulfill one of our missions: to improve access to healthy, local food for ALL Vermonters.*

*Abdoulaye Niane & Marja Makinen,  
Khelcom Farm, Barre*



*The ability to get paid for our work and provide food to so many folks in need is a wonderful symbiotic relationship and one that we hope to foster for years to come.*

*Em and Rose,  
Union Brook Farm, Northfield*





## Supporting Family Milestones



Tailynn first connected with Capstone’s Head Start services after finding out she was pregnant with her first child.

She had set a personal goal to earn her high school diploma but was looking for a place to work towards that achievement with peers who had similar life experiences. With the support of her family, Tailynn learned about Capstone’s [Brook Street High School](#) and enrolled in the program, which serves pregnant and parenting individuals with high school programming and on-site support services.

While Tailynn worked towards completing the credits she needed to graduate, she also benefited from weekly counseling with an on-site clinician, sessions with one of our financial coaches on budgeting, saving, and credit, access to our food shelf, and support groups with a partner organization. She was able to save \$250 and have it matched through our Savings & Credit programs. Her children attended our Head Start early childhood education center in the same building while she was in class.

This past summer she completed her goal and earned her high school diploma. Today, Tailynn and her partner, Todd, have four children ranging from 3 months to 7 years old with two currently enrolled in Head Start classroom services. Head Start has provided her children with high-quality education, helped improve their communication and social skills, and nurtured relationships with trusted teachers. Tailynn believes that having so many resources available in one place while she continued her education has changed her family members’ lives.

## Capstone weatherized 445 homes in 2023.



The [no-cost Weatherization](#) program improves the energy efficiency of homes for Central Vermonters who meet income eligibility and other qualifications.



*I can’t say enough good things about my experience. The crew were kind and considerate, which made them a pleasure to be around.*

*Weatherization program participant*



# Community Collaboration in Moments of Crisis

On July 10, 2023, Vermont experienced historic and catastrophic flooding.

We immediately coordinated emergency food, prepared meals, and water distributions with community partners, including [Another Way](#), [Aldrich Public Library](#), [Enough Ministries](#), [the Good Samaritan Haven](#), [Green Mountain United Way](#), [Hunger Free Vermont](#), Interfaith Churches in Montpelier, [the Intervale Center](#), [Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools](#), [Neighbors in Action](#), THRIVE, [United Way of Lamoille County](#), [Vermont Emergency Eats](#), [Vermont Interfaith Action](#), and [World Central Kitchen](#).

Our staff spent several weekends mucking out homes and providing critical resources to flood survivors in some of the hardest hit areas. We assisted at Red Cross Shelters, Disaster Recovery Centers, and Multi-Agency Resource Centers in Barre, Johnson, and Jeffersonville; we helped people apply for FEMA or the Small Business Administration supports, register for 211, and navigate housing needs.

As a member of the [Vermont Main Street Flood Recovery Fund](#) Board, Capstone helped raise and distribute over \$900,000 for grants to benefit small businesses across the state. We gave out 284 grants of up to \$2,500 to local businesses for rebuilding and recovering from flood damage. We also supported the Vermont Energy Recovery Team (VERT) by administering donated funds to assist survivors with urgent heating needs.

New staff have been hired for a statewide [Disaster Case Management program](#). Collaborating with [Vermont Community Action Partners](#) and Long Term Recovery Groups, this program offers direct case management to flood survivors across the state under the FEMA program guidelines and in partnership with the state of Vermont.

Our generous donors supported mini grants to low-income flood survivors with essential and urgent needs. These included storage units, mold assessments and remediation, plumbing services, electricians and electric bills, propane, contractors, generators, septic services, water heater down payments, gas cards, food, clothing, and transportation services.

Capstone will continue to play a key role in the recovery process, collaborating with partners to foster thriving communities.



# Bridging the Gap with Temporary Housing



Katlyn, her partner, and child were one of the families forced to move from their apartment after the floods that hit our state in July. While staying in hotels as an interim solution, her family was connected with Capstone’s housing support services.

Katlyn worked with Kim Welch, a Capstone housing counselor, and her family moved into one of our temporary housing units. We partner with local landlords to use existing apartments as short-term housing for families who are without a home and seeking permanent housing.

“Working with Kim has been beyond amazing. No one else has ever helped us this much. If you are homeless, they are there to help you,” shares Katlyn.

These essential services bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, providing families like Katlyn’s with housing counseling and connections to much needed resources.

**Capstone’s temporary housing units give people the opportunity to prepare themselves for moving into permanent housing. We offer education and resources that they’re able to use to maintain housing long-term.**

*Kim Welch  
Capstone Housing Counselor*



## FINANCIALS

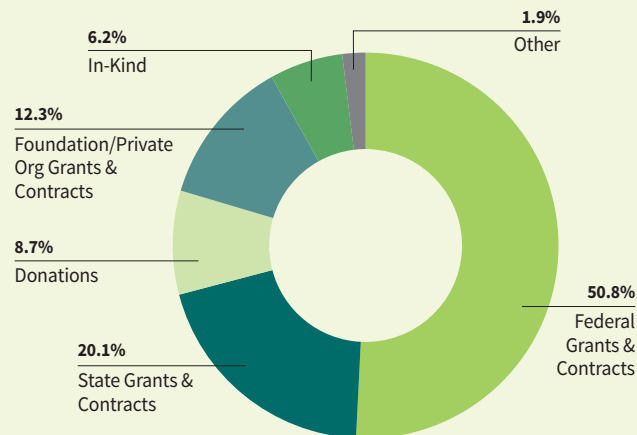
Fiscal year ending  
September 30, 2023

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

20 Gable Place  
Barre, Vermont

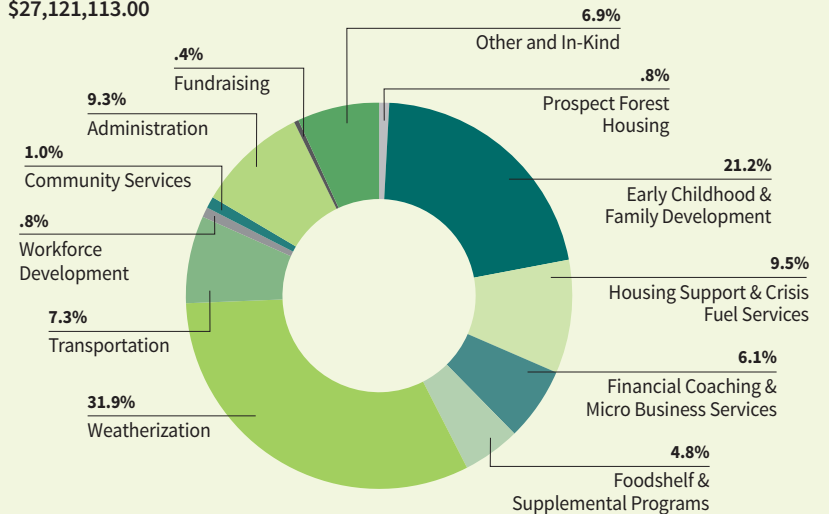
### Total Revenues

\$28,289,414.00



### Total Expenses

\$27,121,113.00





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[capstonevt.org](http://capstonevt.org)

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## Thank You to Our Donors!

Capstone’s success and vision of a community free from poverty is only made possible through philanthropy.

*Capstone Community Action is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



## 2023-2024 Capstone Board of Directors

- Jon Valsangiacomo - *Chair*
- Abby White - *Vice Chair*
- Janet Jansen Murray - *Secretary*
- Nick Kramer - *Treasurer*
- Karen Lowry Reed - *Exec. Comm. At Large*
- Steven Pappas - *Ex-Officio*
- Gina Akley
- Rebecca Clarke
- Michael Giammusso
- Thomas “Kato” Given
- Katherine Lamell
- Robert Mason
- Barbara Miller
- Monica McDonald
- Scott McDonald
- John “Jack” Tighe

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

## 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