



UNITED WAY
Addison County

A special section of the Addison Independent • October 23, 2025

Hands-on reviews lead to Community Impact Funding grants

United Way of Addison County (UWAC), dedicated to addressing the community's most pressing challenges, is proud to announce that its Board of Directors has approved \$132,000 in Community Impact Funding (CIF) for the 2025 grant cycle, with a focus on Health. Because of the generous support of mission-driven donors, UWAC is investing \$12,521 more in its funded partners across three priority areas than in 2024.

UWAC concentrates its efforts in three core areas: Health, Education and Financial Stability. Organizations

applying for CIF grants must align their mission and work with one of these priority areas. Each year, UWAC enters new three-year funding partnerships through this program, guided by a comprehensive review process led by a team of Addison County volunteers. These reviewers evaluate applications and make funding recommendations to UWAC's Board of Directors.

What sets UWAC apart is its trust-based philanthropy approach. Instead of requiring lengthy grant applications, nonprofits begin the process by submitting a simple Letter of Interest.

From there, UWAC's volunteer review team conducts research, examines community data, and schedules site visits to better understand each organization's mission, impact, and needs. This hands-on process ensures that funding decisions are well-informed and deeply rooted in the community's realities.

"UWAC's Community Impact Funding is a powerful investment of local philanthropic dollars that are intentionally flexible so our local nonprofits can use them where/how they are needed most," said Helena Van (See Impact, Page 10)

Special program helps out when disasters strike

Addison County Responds was first launched in 2020 as a COVID-19 emergency relief campaign, allowing UWAC to deploy emergency grants to nonprofit partners and provide relief funds to individuals/families nearly immediately, while also providing continued funding for our partner agencies on the front lines.

In July 2024, a version of this campaign was re-launched: Addison County Responds: Flood Relief, supporting Addison County residents who experienced home and/or property damage from the summer rainfall and who needed financial assistance. This fund was made possible in part thanks to a contribution from the Vermont Flood Response & Recovery Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation.

A volunteer group of community members reviewed 26 applications and recommended award amounts to UWAC. Decisions were typically made within one week of receipt of the request. Priority was

(See Relief, Page 3)

Let's use momentum from our successes

Dear Friends of UWAC,

As we close out our 2024-2025 fiscal year, I want to reflect on what has been a year of growth, resilience, and renewed purpose for United Way of Addison County. Thanks to the unwavering support of our community, partners,

(See Momentum, Page 2)



A TEAM OF Addison County volunteers reviewed United Way's Community Impact Funding grant applications. In 2024 the reviewers were, from left, (front row) Silvia Gonzalez and Linda Schiffer; (back row) Mike Greenwood, Bob Donaghey, Abi Sessions, Jon Crystal, Susan Sears, Linda Harmon, Amy Hoekstra, Nikki Dobрева, Meghan Williamson and Helena Van Voorst.

Momentum

(Continued from Page 1)

board, and staff, we achieved several key milestones that moved us closer to our mission to improve lives and strengthen the community. Among the highlights:

- We were selected as a recipient of a \$625,000 federal grant from Drug-Free Communities to strengthen ongoing efforts to prevent youth substance use in our community.
- Increased our Community Impact Funding (CIF) by \$12,521 and gained three new Health partners.
- Broke our all-time campaign goal by raising \$909,215 (previous records were \$859,941 in 2023-24 and \$810,495 in 2007-08).
- For the second year in a row, Addison County Responds was launched to quickly aid residents affected by flood and water damage from the summer 2024 heavy rainfall.

While we celebrated many successes, this year also brought its share of

“Looking ahead, we are excited to build on this year’s momentum to continue to serve those who need us in Addison County.”

— Helena Van Voorst

challenges. Shifts in the broader landscape have prompted important questions and uncertainties about the future. Through it all, the UWAC team remains committed and ready to adapt, and we continue to strengthen the network of local nonprofits and community partners who deliver critical support to individuals and families across the county. Our donors, funders, and partners play an essential role in sustaining our work, and we are deeply grateful.

Looking ahead, we are excited to build on this year’s momentum to continue to serve those who need us in Addison County. Together, we can continue to make meaningful change and deepen our impact. Thank you for your continued belief in our mission and for walking alongside us on this journey. We could not do this without you.

With gratitude and optimism,

Helena Van Voorst
Executive Director
United Way of Addison County

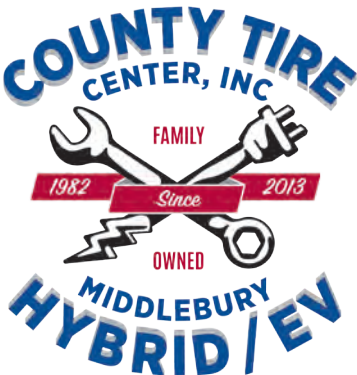


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DURING THE UNITED Way of Addison County's Days of Caring volunteer event this past month, six athletic teams at Middlebury College and several coaches offered their time and efforts, tallying 62 hours of service. Shown here is the Panther women's lacrosse team lending a hand in Starksboro.

A little of your time can make a lot of difference to someone else

Thanks to your generosity, volunteers across Addison County are making a real difference every day. From packing backpacks for students, to weeding community gardens and painting fences, to mobilizing networks through board service, your support fuels the efforts that strengthen our community.

Each September, United Way amplifies this impact during Days of Caring. Over two days, hundreds of volunteers roll up their sleeves to support dozens of local nonprofits.

It's a powerful demonstration of what's possible when people come together, fueled by compassion, teamwork, and the resources that donors like you provide.

Your contributions don't just fund programs; they ignite action, inspire involvement, and connect people with purpose. Thank you for being the driving force behind this work. Together, we're building a more vibrant, resilient Addison County.



PETE ANTOS-KETCHAM

Relief

(Continued from Page 1)

given to applicants who had significant documented home/property damage, and experienced financial hardship as a result of flooding damage.

In Starksboro, a town hit particularly hard in the 2024 floods, the rainfall caused a nearly 40 hour power outage across town. The town's Food Shelf and New Community Project (NCP) nearly lost several hundred pounds of food that was in storage in their shared space at the old Town Office. NCP determined that in order to protect their food supplies and allow both groups to serve food insecure residents during extreme weather events, a back-up power supply would be needed.

NCP reached out to United Way of Addison County who helped supply nearly two-thirds of the funds needed to purchase a Generac automatic back-up generator. With that support, NCP was able to secure the remaining funds needed to complete the purchase and installation of the generator in late spring of 2025.

"Thank you, UWAC for your support and belief in NCP's mission," said Pete Antos-Ketcham, program coordinator for New Community Project. "Having local partners like UWAC is essential as we work to promote justice and fairness to our neighbors in northeast Addison County during these challenging and uncertain times."



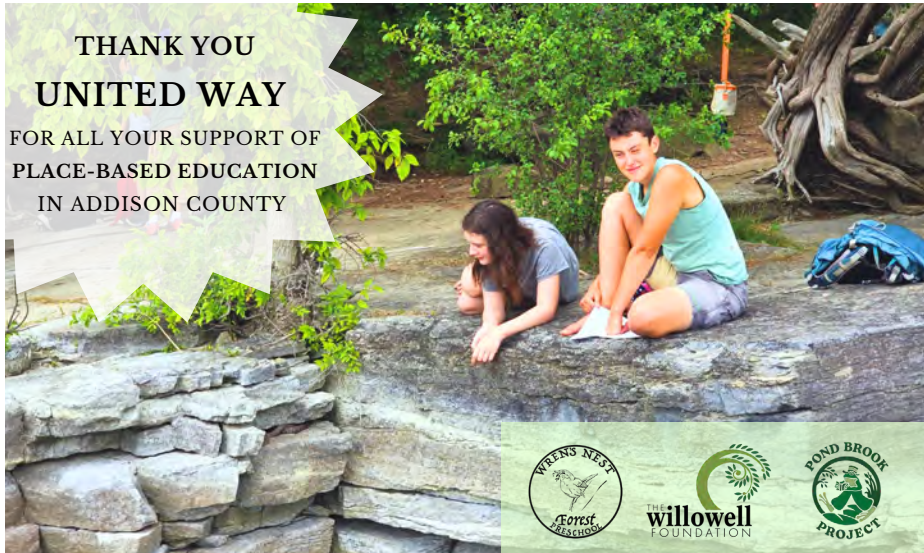
ACORN and the ACORN Food Hub
thanks UWAC for its support of our
Farmacy: Food is Medicine program.



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Caring enough to make high school rights of passage safe



“Celebrate Safely” is an annual campaign geared toward local high school students and their families during prom and graduation season. This initiative serves as a reminder to prioritize safety and good decisions throughout these high-risk events. It’s important for parents and caregivers to have open and honest conversations about substance use, set clear expectations, and establish a supportive environment.

This year, UWAC teamed up with Vive18, a prevention platform that provides engaging education and programming to save students’ lives and create a safer environment to grow. Pictured above is Vive18 spokesperson Zion Givens with the Middlebury Union High School prom committee.



We’re helping kids stop, or never start, using bad substances

At the core of the Addison County Substance Use and Prevention Coalition’s mission to combat youth substance use is the Addison County Youth Survey. This annual survey gathers vital data from students in grades 7-12, offering insights into trends, risk factors, and protective factors that impact our youth. With nearly 70% participation from students across our three school districts (ACSD, ANWSD & MAUSD), we gain a reliable snapshot of key issues in our community.

Collecting local data empowers us to tailor interventions specifically to the needs of Addison County students. For example, the data indicated a low perception of harm associated with cannabis and alcohol, so we launched a targeted campaign called “Celebrate Safely” to raise awareness about the

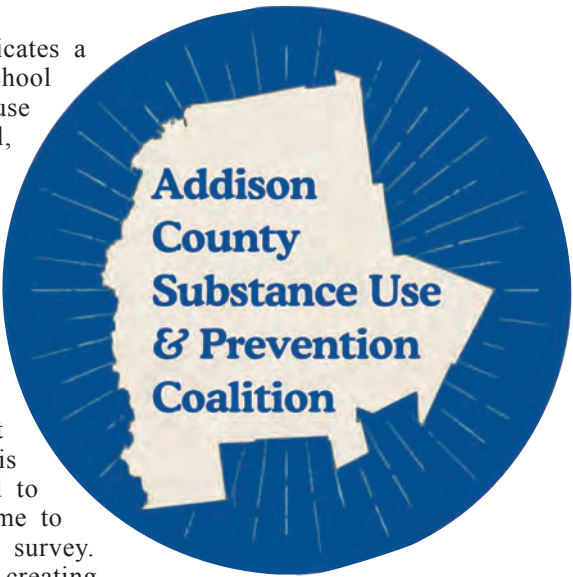
risks and enhance the community’s understanding. Other initiatives have included Community Parent/Caregiver Night, Project Sticker Shock, and more. We extrapolate real-time data and hone in on various subgroups, including LGBTQ+ youth and the BIPOC population, enabling us to identify disparities and advocate for necessary resources and support.

Sharing our findings fosters transparency and trust within the community, sparking essential conversations about substance use and mental health. The data collected in 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025 has consistently highlighted trends in substance use, perceptions of harm, mental health, and more. We are fortunate to continue this important data collection for another five years, thanks to our recently awarded Drug-

Free Communities grant from 2024 through 2029.

Excitingly, recent data indicates a significant decline in high school students’ reported substance use over the past 30 days for alcohol, cannabis and vaping. We are hopeful that this positive trend will continue as we provide ongoing prevention support through the Addison County Substance Use and Prevention Coalition.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our school partners for their unwavering support in ensuring this crucial data is collected year after year and to the students who take the time to participate in this important survey. Your contributions are vital to creating a healthier community for everyone.



**We’re so thankful for all that
the United Way of Addison County
does for our students!**



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SOS helps Vermonters hurt by weather disasters

Starting Over Strong VT, known as SOS-VT, helps individuals and communities recover from natural and human-caused disasters through community outreach and access to mental health services. The program grants are awarded after a presidential major disaster declaration. SOS-VT is here to provide assistance and education to all Vermonters who live and work in the declared counties: Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Lamoille, Orleans and Washington.

When Addison County was among the counties that received a disaster declaration in 2024, UWAC was honored to be selected as a lead organization for SOS-VT. We got trained and then got to work in our communities, playing a key role in connecting local residents to the help they needed. Sometimes that looked like simply offering a compassionate ear, and other times it meant walking alongside

flood survivors to complete paperwork or access longer-term assistance.

Starting Over Strong VT follows key principles that make it different from other survivor support programs:

- Strengths-based: SOS-VT services promote resilience, empowerment and recovery.
- Anonymous: Outreach workers do not classify, label or diagnose people. No records or case files are kept.
- Outreach-oriented: Outreach workers deliver services in the communities rather than wait for survivors to seek their assistance.
- Conducted in nontraditional settings: Outreach workers make contact in homes and communities, not in clinical or office settings.
- Designed to strengthen existing community support systems: SOS-VT supplements, but does not end or replace, existing community systems.



Addison County Youth Survey

The 2025 Addison County Youth Survey was conducted to provide data that can help inform and improve substance misuse prevention programs for Addison County youth and families. This data will also be used to support the evaluation of the United Way of Addison County's Drug Free Communities grant. Similar surveys were conducted in 2021, 2023 and 2024.

60.5% of Addison County High School Students :: 65.9% of Addison County Middle School Students

Think people have moderate or great risk of harming themselves if they smoke marijuana/cannabis once or twice a week.

59.7% of Addison County High School Students :: 61.2% of Addison County Middle School Students

Think people have moderate or great risk of harming themselves if they use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them.

88.5% of Addison County High School Students :: 93.3% of Addison County Middle School Students

Believe parents think it is wrong or very wrong for them to use electronic vapor products.

Scan here for the full summary of results of the 2025 Addison County Youth Survey:



How do you age well?



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- Tai Chi & Wellness Offerings
- Medicare Counseling & Training
- Care & Service Coordination
- Transportation
- Volunteer Opportunities



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Explore volunteer opportunities at our online Volunteer Center. Search by project, organization, or interest!



VUHS grad tapped for UWAC scholarship

Jing Williams of Waltham is the 2025 UWAC Youth Volunteer Scholarship Award recipient. Jing was introduced to volunteering at a young age, growing up in a service-oriented household and often attending community events. As a sophomore, Jing made a weekly commitment to volunteer at Homeward Bound: Addison County’s Humane Society. That same year, Jing attended the first meeting of a new youth service group, the LEOS Club, under the Vergennes Lions, and she never looked back!

“It has been really nice to be part of a group of like-minded individuals who want to get involved in our greater community,” said Jing. “Through the LEOS Club, I have been part of several volunteer efforts, including reading to elementary schoolers, making bird cages at the Otter Creek Wildlife Rescue, and administering eye tests to children. This past year, I had the opportunity to create my senior project with the Club at the Vergennes Community Food Shelf.”

Jing’s senior project with the Food Shelf has involved improving energy efficiency in the Food Shelf’s space. Working closely with Director Paul Vachon, Jing helped coordinate the installation of heat pumps, improved

insulation, new windows, and painting the floor. In addition, Jing helped write grants and find money to support the project. As a result of her efforts, the Leos have established a long-term partnership with the Food Shelf, hoping to return every year for service projects. Cookie Steponaitis, the Adult Mentor for the Vergennes LEOS Club, said Williams was deserving of the scholarship.

“What sets Jing apart from many her age is her willingness to jump in and learn from the ground up,” Steponaitis said. “Before joining us, she was already a leader, but her work in LEOS kicked her skill set into high gear. She has been a part of every major project we have undertaken since 2022. We are honored to have been a part of her early years of community work. I know she will continue to lead as a Lion, community advocate, and teenager who already knows the power of many hands making light work.”

After graduating from Vergennes Union High School, Jing plans to attend Lehigh University to major in Journalism and English. From the entire Board and Staff at United Way of Addison County, congratulations, Jing! Thank you for your service to Addison County!



JING WILLIAMS

Thank you to the donors, staff, and volunteers of United Way of Addison County.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN *all* OF OUR LIVES!

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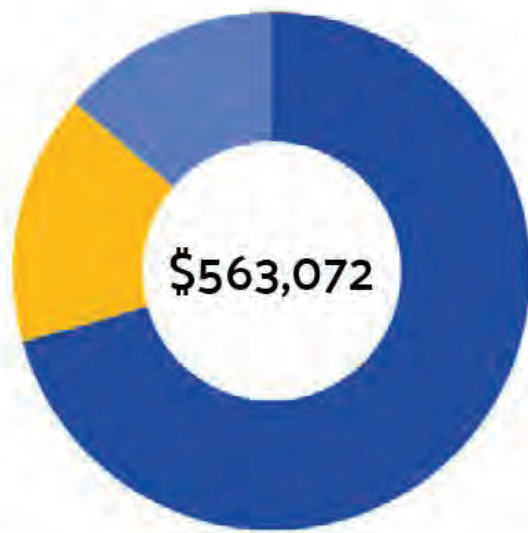
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UWAC FY25 Community Investments



Community Impact Funding Grants:
\$414,737

Community Programs:
\$56,072

Mission Investments:
\$92,263

Community Programs

Addison County Racial Equity Learning Community facilitates conversations with local nonprofit leaders who support each other to dismantle systemic racism both within our organizations and within our communities

Days of Caring connects volunteers with nonprofits for two days of making a change in our community

Learn United, a collaboration with Hedgehog + Fox to bring free professional development opportunities to nonprofits

Stuff the Bus, an annual program that provides 500 backpacks and school supplies to Addison County students

The Volunteer Center connects volunteers with opportunities that match their interests, availability, and passion

Vermont 2-1-1, the helpline that connects callers to available human services including food, shelter and healthcare

Youth Scholarship Award recognizes an Addison County student for their volunteerism

Mission Investments

\$2,063 Warming kits for individuals experience homelessness in Addison County.

\$15,000 **Addison County Housing Solutions Group:** to support individuals experiencing homelessness and the agencies providing services

\$30,200 **Addison County Responds:** relief funding to support Addison County residents who have experienced hardship due to natural disasters or emergencies

\$45,000 Donor-designated funds to five different **Addison County food shelves**



UWAC Staff

The staff of the United Way of Addison County consists of, from left, Steve Williams (Director of Finance), Amy Hoekstra (Community Impact Manager), Helena Van Voorst (Executive Director), Erin Reed (Development & Marketing Director), and Celia Heath (Community Initiatives & Grants Manager). Also, Vergennes Union High School student Gina LeBeau, right, is our Youth Coordinator.



The Addison County 365 Business Circle provides busy entrepreneurs, business owners, and managers an opportunity to make a significant impact on the lives of people in your community - with just one gift. Get involved at UnitedWayAddisonCounty.org.

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Vermont Gynecology
Wildflower Ironworks

United Way



Addison County

The campaign dollars raised in 2024-2025 will allow UWAC to invest in three impact areas with the following partners in the coming Community Impact Funding cycle:

Community Impact Funding FY26

Investment: \$414,737

Health \$132,000

- Addison Allies Network: \$8,000
- Addison Children's Advocacy Center: \$8,000 *
- Addison County Home Health & Hospice: \$12,500
- Addison County Relocalization Network: \$10,000
- Age Well: \$10,000
- Atria Collective: \$20,000
- Elderly Services: \$8,700
- Have-a-Heart Food Shelf: \$5,000 *
- Lund: \$2,000
- Mountain Community Health: \$12,500 *
- Open Door Clinic: \$22,500
- Turning Point Center: \$12,800

Education \$127,737

- Addison County Parent Child Center: \$13,275
- Addison County Readers: \$2,500
- Bixby Memorial Free Library: \$2,500
- Bristol Family Center: \$12,000
- DREAM Program: \$1,500
- The HUB Teen Center & Skatepark: \$9,462
- Mary Johnson Children's Center: \$12,000
- MAUSD Mentoring: \$2,000
- Middlebury Area Land Trust: \$5,000
- Otter Creek Child Center: \$12,000
- Red Clover Children's Center: \$5,000
- Starksboro Cooperative Preschool: \$12,000
- The Teen Center: \$7,500
- Teen Makery After-School: \$10,000
- Vermont Adult Learning: \$11,000
- Willowell Foundation: \$10,000

Financial Stability \$155,000

- Addison Housing Works: \$20,000
- CVOEO: \$5,000
- Charter House Coalition: \$22,500
- Counseling Service of Addison County: \$20,000
- HomeShare Vermont: \$10,000
- HOPE: \$22,500
- John Graham Housing & Services: \$22,500
- New Community Project: \$5,000
- Tri-Valley Transit: \$22,500
- Vergennes Community Food Shelf: \$5,000

* Indicates new funded partner in FY26

Impact

(Continued from Page 1)

Voorst, executive director of UWAC. “The Board and Staff of UWAC are deeply committed to aligning all of our resources — financial, strategic, and relational — to support the success of the organizations we fund.”

Amy Hoekstra, UWAC’s Community

Impact Manager, led the CIF process from start to finish.

“We’re incredibly grateful for the thoughtful work of our team and community partners, and for the support of the UWAC Board of Directors,” Hoekstra said. “This outcome reflects our shared commitment to equity and impact.”



UWAC Board of Directors

The volunteers that make up United Way of Addison County's Board of Directors represent the small business, higher education, health and human service, and financial service sectors, as well as the community at large.

Silvia Gonzalez, **President/Chair**

Laura Mack, **Vice President/Vice Chair**

Sarah Cowan, **Treasurer**

Jon Crystal, **Secretary**

Ryan Torres, **Member-at-Large**

Fahimeh Bahrami

Nikki Dobрева

Janet Franklin

Mike Greenwood

Meghan Williamson

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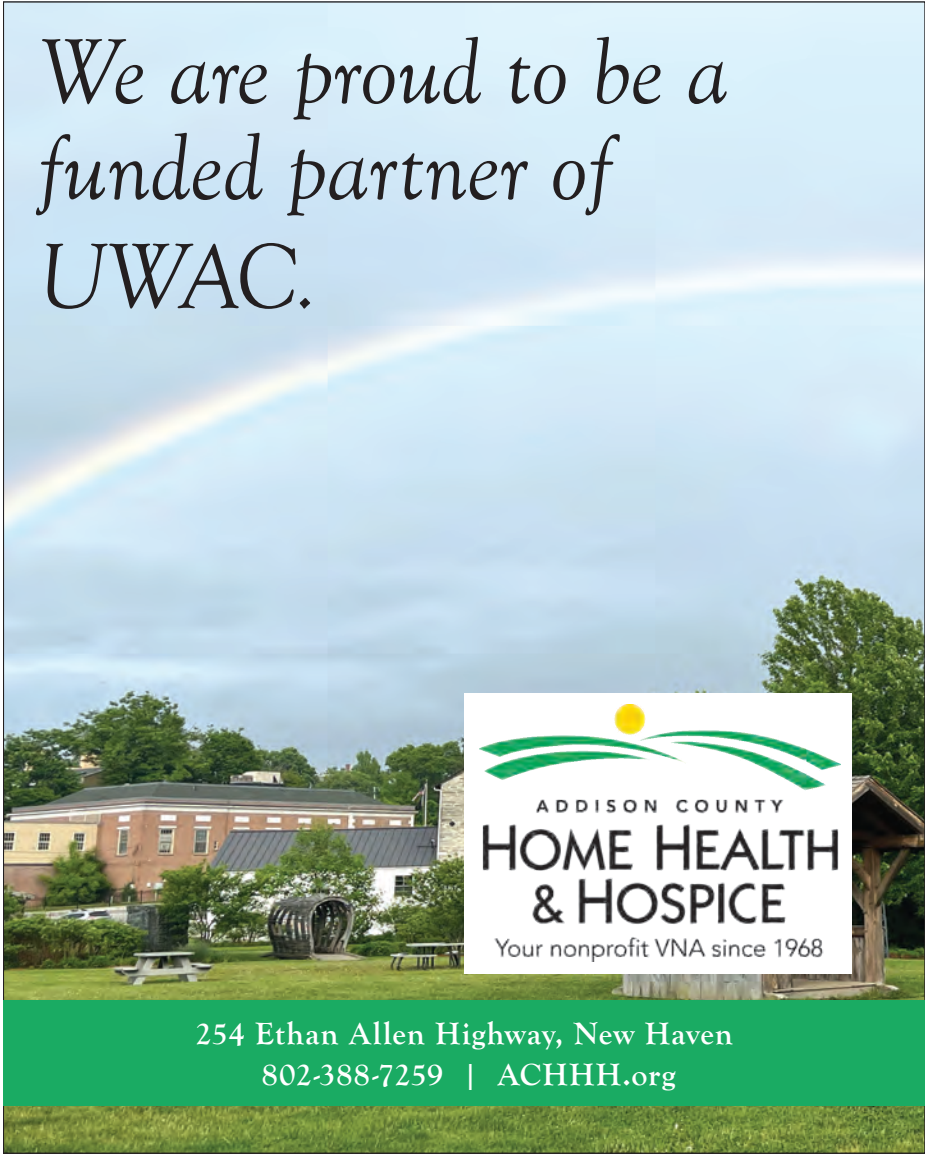
Each of us can make a difference for a neighbor - but when we come together, we can make change for all.

GIVE.
Monthly gifts, planned gifts, one-time donations, gifts of stock; your gifts of every size and type help change lives and make Addison County stronger.

ADVOCATE.
Policy change can be big or small and you can play a role, regardless of age or circumstance. Advocating can mean anything from petitioning politicians to mobilizing friends and family to fight for a critical cause.

VOLUNTEER.
Nothing makes us happier than connecting a volunteer to the needs in our community. Whether you're an individual who wants to offer your time and expertise or a nonprofit in need of assistance, we are here to help.

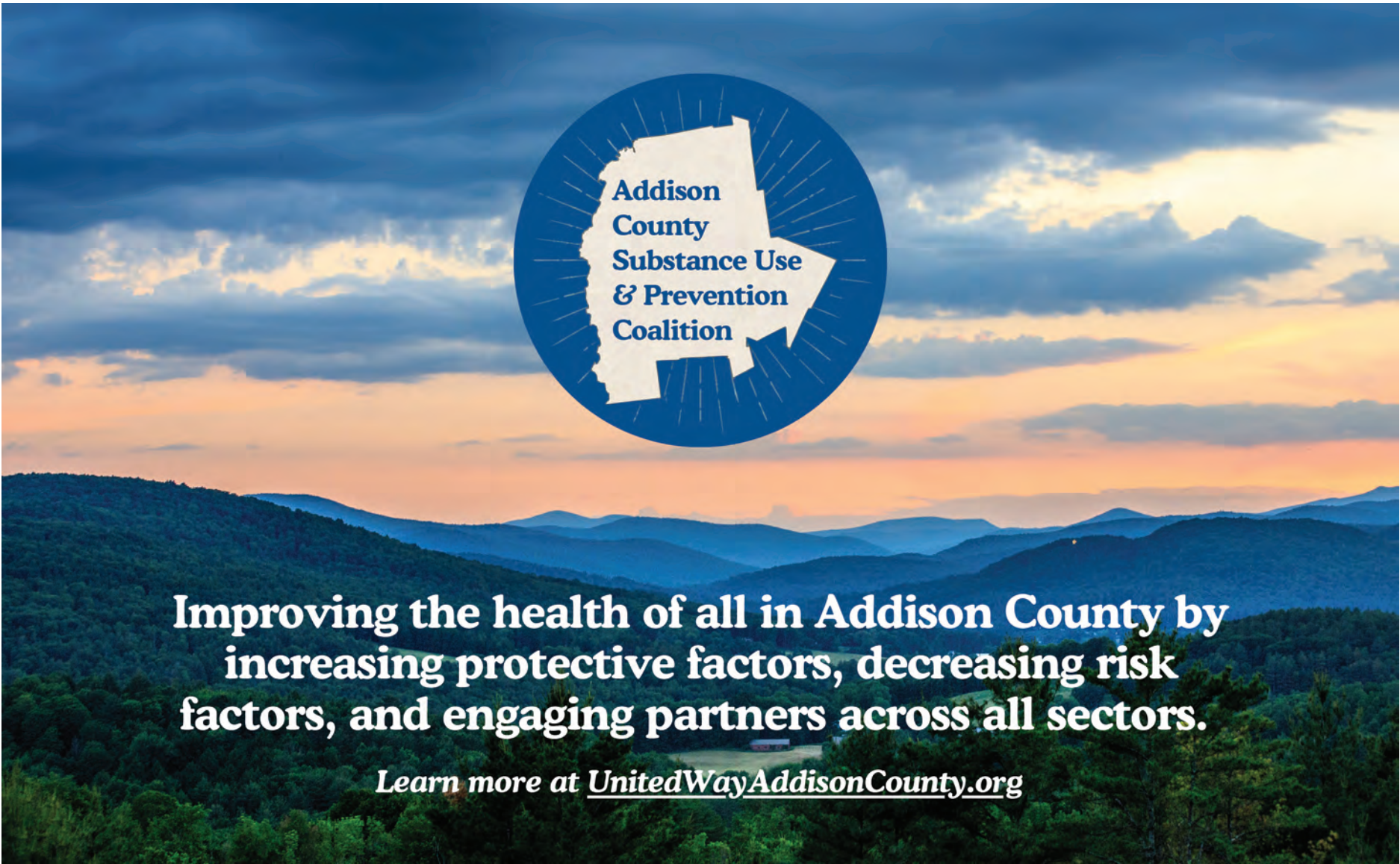
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Pedal power

AMY HOEKSTRA, UWAC's Community Impact Manager, enjoys helping a smoothie bike rider at Porter Medical Center's centennial birthday party in June.



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COMMUNITY!



SCP is a five-star program that has provided early education to children and families throughout Addison County for over 50 years.

THANK YOU!



United Way of Addison County



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Collaborating and Convening

In 2023, United Way of Addison County formally adopted a trust-based philanthropy approach to our grantmaking. But in truth, this philosophy has long guided how we engage with our nonprofit community: by learning,

collaborating, and sometimes even commiserating together. Trust-based philanthropy calls on us to uncover biases and create space for open dialogue, shared learning, transparency, and humility. We're proud

to work alongside organizations beyond our funded partners - whether through Learn United seminars (co-hosted with Hedgehog & Fox Collaborative), mobilizing volunteers for Days of Caring, or making meaningful connections at the

regular community meetings hosted at UWAC and throughout the county. If there's a way we can work together, please reach out to Helena at helena@unitedwayaddisoncounty.org.



THANK YOU
UNITED WAY

Otter Creek Child Center Inc.
"Celebrating 40 years of helping children discover their love for learning"
ottercreekcc.org

**Thank you for standing with us
and for believing, as we do, that
United is the Way.**

Please make your gift at UnitedWayAddisonCounty.org

By supporting UWAC, you're making a meaningful investment in your local community. Here are just a few ways your contributions have empowered some of our funded partners during 2024-2025



324 people received local fruit and vegetable shares from organic farms from **ACORN's Farmacy program**. The Farmacy program is free for patients who have been referred by their physicians. This "Prescription CSA" or "Food is Medicine" program addresses three major needs in Addison County: diet-related illness, food insecurity, and local farm viability.



25 matches were made in Addison County through **HomeShare Vermont's** programming. HomeShare Vermont provides a comprehensive screening and matching process and ongoing support to pair Vermonters with extra room in their homes and folks looking for an affordable place to live.



1,279 patients were served by **Open Door Clinic (ODC)**. ODC provides care for the uninsured and underinsured members of our community via direct care (chronic and acute, mental, and dental health), insurance navigation, and farmworker outreach.



68 students were served through **Vermont Adult Learning's** College and Career Readiness program. This program helps prepare students to enter the workforce, improve employment opportunities, and enter post-secondary job training or college.

The United Way helps to support the Addison County Parent/Child Center's Learning Together Program.

The Learning Together Program is an intensive, twenty-eight hour per week training program which focuses on helping young people gain the job readiness and retention skills along with other skills that prepare participants to be successful in the work place, as parents, and in life.

The program consists of six basic components, while representing a general framework, are balanced through a schedule that is individualized for each participant. Participants spend the bulk of their hours in Learning Together at an on-the-job placement doing childcare, clerical work or food service at the Center. The focus is on learning how to get along with co-workers, how to take supervision, how to be reliable and dependable and able to avoid distractions while on the job.

Parental Resilience: We work with families in their homes, in community and in our Learning Together Program. Each family has an outreach worker who can support them in ways that the family is expressing as helpful. Learning Together provides support through classes, groups, peer connections and counseling opportunities. Outreach workers offer families help with housing, transportation, medical appointments and financial help.

Social Connections: Learning Together, which offers 28 hours per week of programming for parents and youth at risk of dropping out of school and/or becoming parents early. Participants

are able to get and give peer support and receive professional supports while their children are in a therapeutic childcare setting.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: We teach parenting weekly, as well as give individual supports to parents who are with us in childcare or in their homes. Parents spend time in childcare and learn strategies in the room, with their child.

Concrete Support in Times of Need: we have a family assistance fund where families can access up to \$250 per year to help them through hard times, lessening stress in their lives. We also provide supports such as food, clothing and help to find housing.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children: The core of Learning Together is that one third of the time a parent is in our program; they are in childcare with professional caregivers and their children. We teach parenting through teaching child care job skills and focus on development and well-being for children. We focus on emotional regulation for children and other developmental and pro-social behaviors. We have key phrases to help parents and children. We focus on building the relationship between the parent and child. Our therapeutic program works on the social and emotional well-being of infants and toddlers.



**Addison County
Parent/Child Center**

info@addisoncountypcc.org

addisoncountypcc.org

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Thank you, UWAC!

Together, We're making a Difference in our Community

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Turning Point Center
OF ADDISON COUNTY



United Way of Addison County is committed to:

- Leading in collaboration
- Raising awareness and support
- Being ever-evolving and forward-thinking

Our mission: To mobilize the compassion and generosity of individuals and organizations in Addison County to improve **lives** and strengthen the community.



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