

The Gift of Independence ...continued

Debbie especially loves to cook for people, everything from cakes to steak to shepherd's pie. But now, cooking is getting harder for her. Between a recent lung cancer diagnosis, decreased mobility from a car crash, and blindness in her right eye, Debbie can't get around the way she used to. And with the pandemic, leaving her apartment is riskier than ever.

Despite her health problems, Debbie says that she wants more than anything to be "independent." Debbie is grateful for assistance

from Feeding Chittenden's Homebound Delivery Program, which allows her to still cook for herself in her own apartment. With your support we are able to send biweekly deliveries of fresh groceries to people like Debbie and her neighbors.

Feeding Chittenden is committed to growing and improving our Homebound Delivery Program and we are asking for your support today! With your donation, we will be able to coordinate food deliveries that contain items chosen by the recipient that best align with their diets through

an order-ahead system. We will be able to deliver to more households across Chittenden County by growing our organizational capacity and vehicle fleet. **We are relying on your support as we head into the winter months with COVID-19 still posing a significant threat to our community.**

*Interviewed & Written by:
Adelaide Szczeniul, Communications
and Development VISTA*

Feeding Chittenden is getting a mural across the outside of the building thanks to VSECU and Mission Murals!

Here's the first stage of the mural, painted by Abby Manock. She found inspiration in the diversity of cultures, languages, and even fabric patterns that carry meaning among communities in the Burlington area.



Follow us on Instagram [@feedchittenden](https://www.instagram.com/feedchittenden) for updates!

Visit feedingchittenden.org for news, updates, and ways to give



SUMMER 2020 SEASONAL REPORT

Feeding Chittenden's Food Access Center

COVID-19 has caused food insecurity in Vermont to rise 33%. In addition, health and safety protocols have fueled major changes in the way community food shelves distribute food to those in need. With your support, Feeding Chittenden was able to instantly respond by shifting to distributing pre-packaged grocery boxes. As we continue to adapt and grow under these conditions, we are re-focusing on expanding access in order to ensure that anyone in need can get help at Feeding Chittenden. We need to empower choice so families get the food that they need and

distribute it in a way that meets people where they are.

Feeding Chittenden's Food Access Center is focused on increasing access to healthy food by growing our home delivery distribution capacity throughout Chittenden County and creating choice by offering an online ordering system that allows food insecure families to choose the grocery items that they need - reducing waste and minimizing stigma. The goal of this initiative is to feed struggling Vermonters who have trouble accessing our services due to trans-



portation barriers, health issues, advanced age, stigma and shame around "charitable food."

The Gift of Independence

Debbie's homebound grocery delivery empowers independence during a very vulnerable time.

Each month, staff and volunteers deliver a five-day supply of groceries to 200 homebound clients - seniors and older adults, those living with a disability, and sick or recovering individuals. When COVID-19 hit, we experienced a drastic increase in demand for this program and a major change in what it means to be homebound. We fielded more calls than ever before from those staying at home due to compromised immune systems, the need to self-quarantine or self-isolate, advanced age causing



increased fear of leaving the home, and parents and caregivers at home with children and no way to leave to get groceries.

Even the most resilient of community members need a bit of help sometimes - Debbie, a recipient of

Feeding Chittenden's Homebound Grocery Delivery service, is no exception. Debbie has moved around a lot in her life. She spent several years homeless in Burlington, sleeping in various shelters and communal living situations. But even when she was homeless, Debbie did all she could to be there for others, from listening to their problems to sharing what little money she had to buy them food: as she explains,

"I love to help people. That is what God put me on this earth for. Not to hurt people. You have to give, give, give, whether they reciprocate or not. It doesn't matter. You still have to help people, and I've done it all my life."

(Cont'd on page 4)

From the Desk of the Director

Dear Friend of Feeding Chittenden,

The past several months have sparked dramatic and immediate change for our organization. Since the beginning of the pandemic we have pivoted in ways we never thought possible to create more access for everyone who needs food. I'm so proud of our staff for their response to this crisis and for ensuring no one goes without food in our region. I'm also humbled and extremely grateful to our friends in partnering organizations and to YOU, our community of supporters who sustain this vital work.

In early spring, we welcomed hundreds of first-time visitors to our door who were newly unemployed. To respond to safety concerns, our entire operation changed over one weekend. The food pantry became curbside pickup and our cafeteria changed to offer take-out meals. Deliveries of food to people's homes doubled and our culinary job training program became an emergency meal program. We hired two of our culinary graduates to prepare and package meals as well as a delivery driver.

Soon, our staff was coordinating volunteers to deliver 1400 meals per day to people sheltered in hotels and motels throughout the county. Within days volunteers and staff were also delivering groceries to hundreds of people, including seniors and people with disabilities afraid to ride the bus or leave their homes. On site we immediately put safety plans in place to protect staff and volunteers as well as visitors picking up food.

Across the nation we heard similar stories of the critical pandemic response from food banks and the charitable food network. Dramatic video of long lines of people seeking food inspired action and support from many different sectors. Together we learned how vulnerable our food system can be as food manufacturing plants closed and supermarkets ran out of products. This news also brought more anxiety and hardship for people experiencing food insecurity here in Vermont.

Since 1974 our work has been dedicated to helping people who experience hunger by adapting to change with our programming and impact. This year we will implement an online market which will allow people to order ahead and explore new methods for providing food with dignity. Our plans include partnerships with service organizations and health care providers including increased deliveries and alternate pick-up sites.

We have so much more work ahead of us. With added safety and contingency plans in place, we will ensure emergency food is available to everyone in our region. With the help of supporters like you, we can continue to respond to this current crisis moving forward and increase food access for years to come.

Stay safe and eat healthy!



Give through our VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVE!

Social distancing and safety measures have made it challenging to host the traditional holiday food drive. Good news! You can still give back to your community this season through our newly launched Virtual Food Drive at feedingchittenden.org!



Fill a virtual shopping cart with the items we need most without leaving home. We will use the funds to purchase these items wholesale, getting better rates than retail prices. Your donation will stretch farther this year, and will help community members in need while leaving extra food on grocery store shelves for our neighbors.

WELCOME, AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE!

Feeding Chittenden is proud to present its Ambassador Committee, a select group of committed individuals who strive to make a difference and promote hunger relief efforts. Members will work alongside staff and volunteers at Feeding Chittenden to raise awareness about hunger in our community, assist in fundraising for the organization, and connect individuals and organizations with Feeding Chittenden to make a positive impact in the lives of food insecure Vermonters.

- Beth Warren, *Committee Chair*
- Tom Messner
- Barb Devine
- Deb Light
- A.J. LaRosa
- Andrew Thomson
- Tim Fortune
- Steve Gentile
- Elvira Tripp

