



Director's Report

Slate Valley Cares

June 1st-30th, 2024

Monthly Overview

This month has been an exciting one! We received some substantial grants to support the expansion of services in a very flexible way, as well as the long-awaited completion of the awning project. As this marks the end of the fiscal year, it has been interesting looking through the data collected and beginning to formalize strategies to better serve, support, and partner with the greater community. Hopefully the following will be the seeds of thoughts for future conversations as we continue to explore unique methods for providing excellent, innovative service.

Community Meals as Social Gatherings

Through the Vermont Food Bank Capacity Grant, we received funding earmarked to broaden services. This is an intentionally vague statement designed to give us some flexibility. After the success of our June barbeque with the Congregational Church and the Touch-A-Truck event, we are going to continue along that thought and experiment with offering community meals as social gatherings. The idea of creating an excuse to come together, have fun, socialize, and share food has powerful implications.

We have scheduled two such events:

- Yard Games & Community BBQ – July 26th
- Rock-Paper-Scissors Tournament & Cookout – August 16th

Not only will these events fulfill all the above, but they will also create greater social awareness of Slate Valley Cares and act as a small fundraiser. We will continue to trial these community meals as social gatherings outside while the weather permits into the fall. After which we will assess their effectiveness and determine how to proceed into the future.

Grants-UPDATE

I am happy to report that we have heard back from two of the many grant applications Bo and I have been submitting over the past two months. The Ben & Jerry's Community Foundation awarded us a grant of \$1,000 and the Vermont Food Bank awarded us \$18,800. Both grants were framed to support staff and expansion of services/resources through the Right to Food Center.

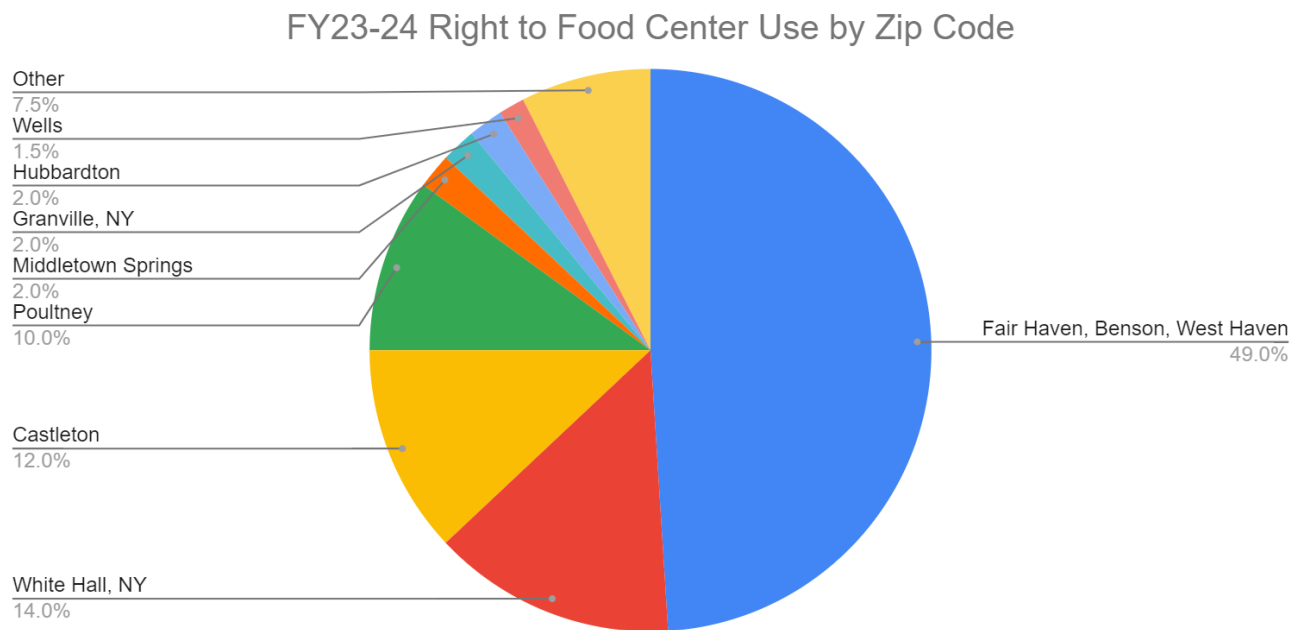
We are still waiting to hear back from a handful of other organizations regarding pending grant applications. Earlier in the month I had a follow up interview with United Way, as our \$10,000 grant application made it into the final phases of the decision-making process. I am told they will share their decision by the end of July.

Lastly, Bo and I are trialing a website that aggregates grant opportunities called Grant Gopher. There are many available options, however, most are incredibly expensive and beyond the reach of a small nonprofit. After the trial period, Grant Gopher is only \$9/month. This site was recommended to us by the Grant Team at the Vermont Food Bank and has many positive reviews. I will be sure to continue to include updates on this matter as we gain more experience and interactions.

Zip Code Informed Strategies

As June marks the end of our fiscal year, data compilation and review are important and useful tools to get a broader view of where we have been, who and how effectively we serve, and better understand where we are going. One of the most interesting metrics I like to look at is membership based on Zip code. Although there are flaws and things to consider when viewing our services through this lens, it is, nonetheless, a decent framework for planning and developing strategies.

Before we go further, there are two important aspects I would like to point out. First, to date, we have done no formal marketing campaigns targeting members in the community that might benefit from our services. We did, however, just get \$1,500 in one of our grants for marketing and promotional materials. Thus, all new members find us organically or by word-of-mouth. This past year we averaged 42 new members per month. Second, because our software tracks by zip code and not town name, Fair Haven, Benson, and West Haven are all lumped into one category.



Through this information, we can begin developing strategies for three main categories that we will target during FY 24-25: Financial, Promotional & Marketing, and Community Support. Each strategy is very straightforward with our focus and level of engagement within each strategy framed around our zip-code-based data.

Financial Strategy

Based on current food purchasing trends and community demand, we are projected to spend a minimum of \$7,500 per month on food during FY 24-25. This means we will have to be more direct with the communities we serve when it comes to asking for financial support. Thus, we will use last year’s Use by Zip Code data to petition to be on each town’s annual budget in hopes of gaining their support. Below is a chart with the proposed amount to be requested from each town based on the Use by Zip Code data.

Currently, Slate Valley Cares annually receives \$29,500 from the Town of Fair Haven, \$2,000 from the Town of Benson, and \$1,500 from the Town of West Haven. The table below is based on each zip codes user percentage times a desired budget of \$100,000, minus \$7,500 that represents the 7.5% “Other” category. These numbers may need to be adjusted based on organizational and community response. Please view this table more as a conversation starter and less as fixed line items.

Promotional & Marketing Strategy

With the \$1,500 we got within the VT Food Bank Capacity Grant for promotion and marketing, we will target Castleton, Poultney, and White Hall, NY, as they represent the three largest communities, outside of Fair Haven, that frequent the Right to Food Center. As our organization has been framed in a very Fair Haven-centric way for the last 40 years, it is important to formally announce to other communities that they are welcome to shop at the Right to Food Center.

Community Support Strategy

This aspect focuses on creating lines of communication between SVC and representatives of each town. Most of these towns have their own free food distribution sites, however, they may operate minimal hours each month or in limited capacities. By making each town aware of SVC and our services they may choose to promote our organization to their community members as a supplement to their own. Otherwise, we may be able to support them if they would like to create more robust, dignified programming to support their community members themselves. This process must be taken up town by town, as each relationship will be unique based on the town.

Financial Requests FY 24-25	
Town	Ask from Town Budget
Fair Haven	\$44,500
Benson	\$2,500
West Haven	\$2,000
White Hall, NY	\$14,000
Castleton	\$12,000
Poultney	\$10,000
Middletown Springs	\$2,000
Granville, NY	\$2,000
Hubbardton	\$2,000
Wells	\$1,500
Total	\$92,500

Awnings-UPDATE

The moment has finally arrived: The awnings are up and looking beautiful! After a year of complications, we finally reached the finish line. Robyn, one of the landlords was the first to compliment them, saying that she thought they made the building more attractive. Not only that, we’ve also already seen a decrease in our monthly electric bill, keeping the shop cooler and having to use the A/C less.

Vermont Soap Company Partnership

One of our amazing volunteers, Edward Thorndike, was also Vermont Soap Company’s first employee, long again. Through many visits and conversations, Edward was able to create a partnership between VT Soap and SVC so that we may receive regular donations of their Soap products, including pet soaps and sprays. Thank you, Edward!

Conclusion

As we move into our new fiscal year, I look forward to exploring more creative ways of funding and administering the important work we do with our community.

Quick Stats

June 2024

Households Served: 746 (Down 96 Households)

All Served: 1,622 (Down 290 Individuals)

New Household Applications: 21 (Down Households)

Finances as of July 1st, 2024

- Operating Account: \$86,821.37
 - Emergency Fund: \$3,000.00
 - Right to Food Center Account: \$10,000.00
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Submitted by: Jeffrey Jackson, Executive Director—July 3rd, 2024