

55+ Volunteers Lead With Experience

RSVP of Northwest Vermont

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A program of



United Way of
Northwest Vermont

Meals on Wheels Volunteers: Delivering Food and a Friendly Face to Elders in Our Community

by Beth Glaspie, RSVP Volunteer

Whoever said “There is no such thing as a free lunch” hasn’t heard of Meals on Wheels (MOW), the program dedicated to supporting seniors in their desire to live independently by delivering nutritious meals to their door at no—or very low—cost. Two local non-profit organizations fiercely devoted to this cause are Burlington Meals on Wheels (BMOW), founded in 1972, and Essex Meals on Wheels (EMOW), founded in 1973.

Don’t let the names fool you. Burlington MOW, located at 3 Cathedral Square, covers not only the city, but also South Burlington, Winooski, Shelburne,

“The Meals on Wheels driver may be the only person a client sees during the course of a week.”

—Karen Hershberg

Charlotte, parts of Williston and Colchester and, as needed, other towns outside of Chittenden County. Essex MOW, a separate entity operating out of a church in Essex Junction, covers Essex, Jericho, Underhill, Richmond and parts of Colchester and Williston.

Both organizations function on a hub

and spoke principle, whereby meals are prepared in a commercial-grade kitchen and distributed

by volunteers *Alan Luzzatto at Essex Meals on Wheels*

efficiently mapped-out routes throughout the county. Volunteers arrive at the kitchens at about 9:30 each weekday morning to load freshly prepared meals into coolers that they have either brought with them or are supplied, depending on the program. Burlington volunteers return supplied coolers to the kitchen after their shift. All drivers are given route sheets with clear directions and client information.

Staff in each kitchen plan out a month’s worth of balanced meals, paying attention not only to nutritional value and variety, but also to any special dietary needs or requests of the clients.

Clients—numbering 250 for BMOW and at least 150 for EMOW—are not charged for meals, but their contributions are welcome on a “pay what you can” basis. Funding comes in part from the



Congratulations RSVP Volunteer Dave Jillson: Hometown Hero of the Month in April

WELCOME NEW RSVP VOLUNTEERS!

Sidney Eley
 Ilene Fortin
 Rick Gelin
 Manon Klaszky
 Nancy McRae
 Nicole Peterson
 Teresa Robinson
 Marguerite Robtoy
 Albert Weldon
 Martha Woodman

David was interviewed live by WPTZ Meteorologist Tom Messner and presented with his award by Laurie Dana, United Way of Northwest Vermont and Phelan Fretz, Executive Director of ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain.

David has been serving as a School Buddy at The New North End Youth Center at Hunt Middle School in Burlington for three years, where he helps advanced math students take on extra challenges. Teacher Kathy Hevey says she feels lucky to have Jillson in her classroom. “He cares about the subject matter, he cares about kids, and he’s one of those people that retiring didn’t mean retreating. Instead he is still very active and his commitment is just phenomenal.”



Dave Jillson at ECHO where our Hometown Hero of the Month presentations take place

RSVP To Offer More Learning Opportunities

SPREAD THE WORD!

We always welcome referrals of new volunteers to the RSVP program.

If you know someone who wants to make a difference or who would benefit from volunteering, please have them contact us.

One of the advantages of being part of the RSVP program is the opportunity to attend Coffee Hours and in-service programs on various topics related to volunteering and living a healthy and active life as an older adult in the community. At the RSVP Recognition Event in May, we surveyed attendees about topics they would be interested in learning more about. These are the top choices:

- Preventing Elder Fraud
- Health and Aging

- Cooking for One
- Healthy Eating Tips and Strategies
- Behavior Management for Classrooms
- Addiction in Our Community
- Stress and Sleep Issues

Over the next few months, we will start rolling out these learning opportunities. Anyone who is part of the RSVP program is welcome to attend. Consider bringing a friend aged 55+ to introduce them to our volunteer matching service!

**If you have other suggestions for learning topics,
please contact your Program Coordinator:**

Susan Abell at 860-7823 or email susana@unitedwaynwvt.org
 or Mary Pelkey at 524-6337 or email maryp@unitedwaynwvt.org

Meals on Wheels Volunteers Deliver

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local agency on aging as well as through grants and community donations. Peter Carmolli, Executive Director of BMOW, says his focus is on fundraising and procuring food at a lower cost. Farmer's markets, local farms and backyard gardens have proven to be wonderful, generous resources for the programs. Patti Smallwood, who, as kitchen manager for EMOW, is in charge of menu planning and food buying, referenced reaping the benefits of "garden surplus vegetables" for her meals, which twice a month are adorned by a dessert made—and donated—by a friend of hers with a passion for baking.

"We're always looking for volunteers. Without them Burlington Meals on Wheels would shut down."

—Peter Carmolli

Volunteer drivers also act as the eyes and ears of MOW, watching and listening for signs of ill health or distress and reporting back to their MOW coordinators. Carmolli says that in this regard, "The volunteer is as valuable as the food [they deliver]." The MOW drivers may be the only person a client sees during the course of the week. Karen Hershberg, program administrator at EMOW, refers to this vigilance as "the safety check," and volunteer orientation includes learning what signs to watch for. In this way, volunteers help provide not only food, but peace of mind as well.

"We're always looking for volunteers. Without them, BMOW would shut down," says Carmolli, adding that his volunteer roster drops by half in winter. He asks for a once-a-month commitment and noted that many deliver in pairs, and many of those pairs regularly make it a social occasion by meeting for lunch after their shift.

Judy Rivers, an RSVP volunteer from Burlington, was looking for something that she and her husband could do together in their retirement. Once a month, the couple delivers on a route that encompasses the Old North End and neighborhoods along North Avenue, spending about two hours delivering to up to

30 clients. She said that she's very impressed by the amount of meals BMOW puts out and feels proud to be giving back through this important program.

RSVP volunteer Alan Luzzatto, of Essex, delivers to up to 18 clients on his shift, driving over 40 miles on a route that takes him as far east as Underhill. Speaking about EMOW, Luzzatto said, "I'm really proud of what they do. It's all done very professionally." He shared his philosophy: "If we, as individuals, all chip in, we can make a difference."

Both Hershberg and Carmolli remarked with near awe on the tenure of their volunteers, many of whom have been involved for 15 to 20 years or more. Something about the work and the people and the mission takes hold once you get a taste of MOW. Hershberg and Carmolli themselves first started as volunteer drivers 19 years ago, when the EMOW clients numbered 35.

Volunteers enjoy flexibility, too, knowing that a substitute can be found if they have a conflict

or go on vacation. For example, Hershberg explained, when the snowbirds return to Vermont they replace the year-round residents who head to their camps for summer. Flexibility and a small minimum commitment, makes it easy to fit MOW into one's schedule.

Speaking to his organization's mission of "feeding the elderly and infirm to help them stay in their homes," Carmolli shared a staggering fact: "We can feed one person for a whole year for less than it costs to spend one day in the hospital." Thanks to the staff and volunteers of the region's MOW organizations, more of our senior neighbors can choose independence.



RSVP Volunteer Harriet Long with Jan Abbott at Burlington Meals on Wheels

United Way of Northwest Vermont sponsors RSVP of Northwest Vermont and the Foster Grandparent Program. In addition, United Way connects volunteers of all ages with nonprofit organizations that community needs. Simply call (802) 860-1677 or visit our website www.unitedwaynwvt.org.

United Way volunteer services are supported in part through donations to United Way of Northwest Vermont as well as federal, state and local grants.



Senior Corps is a program of the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). It provides opportunities for Americans 55 and over to serve their communities. Senior Corps programs include RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program. Nationwide over 500,000 volunteers who are 55 and over are involved with Senior Corps.

RSVP of Northwest Vermont received \$82,013 or 52% of the program's total funding from CNCS. Additional program funders include the State of Vermont, Town of Essex, City of South Burlington and the Essex Rotary Club.

Volunteer Profile

Joyce Potenzano's Story

Joyce Potenzano first became an RSVP volunteer in Rutland Vermont back in 1999. At that time, the region was experiencing difficult economic times and Joyce, who owned a small restaurant outside of town, was forced to close her doors. Though she was devastated, she was also determined not to sit idle. Joyce immediately 'marched into the local RSVP office' and presented herself for volunteer service. Though Joyce had gone to nursing school many years prior, marriage and family had intervened, causing a change in plans. Now Joyce hoped for, and received, her first volunteer placement at the Rutland Regional Medical Center. It was a natural fit.



RSVP Volunteer Joyce Potenzano, "on duty" at the UVM Medical Center

When Joyce moved to Chittenden County in 2002, one of her first steps was to the University of Vermont Medical Center, where she again hoped to serve within a health care environment. She has been there ever since. Joan Chace, Volunteer Services Coordinator, says of Joyce "She is knowledgeable, efficient, and a very kind person who keeps the comfort of our patients and their families as a top priority. We are very fortunate to have Joyce as a member of our volunteer family!"

Joyce has held several posts in her years with the UVM Medical Center but has recently landed at the South Prospect Street (formerly known as UHC) Registration Desk. There she assists both patients and their families, helping them understand policies and procedures, but mostly providing much needed emotional support. As Joyce explains, "I want each of them to know they

are in good hands and that everything is going to be okay."

But that's not all. Joyce also serves at The American Red Cross, as an RSVP bulk mailer, and at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts where she works at the matinee performances, helping homeschooled children check-in and learn the ropes.

When asked why she dedicates so much time to helping others, Joyce replies "It keeps me going. I don't think about what pain I have that day. I can't just sit around feeling sorry for myself because I've got more important things to do."

RSVP Welcomes New Director

Ellen Biddle is the new Program Director for RSVP of Northwest Vermont, and we could not be more excited! Ellen brings with her a diverse resume, with experience in human resources, staff development, marketing, and media relations. She is a dedicated volunteer herself, serving many organizations over the years: Burlington Boys and Girls Club, Burlington Sunrise Rotary Club, Lund Family Center, United Way of Chittenden County, and Burlington Meals on Wheels as a decades-long volunteer. When not at work, Ellen is an avid reader, adventurous home cook, suburban gardener and voracious traveler but is happiest when spending time with her opinionated almost thirteen-year-old daughter exploring the wilds of Vermont.



Susan Abell (left), Wendy Spencer CEO of Corporation for National & Community Service (center) and Ellen Biddle (right)

RSVP staff members Susan Abell (Coordinator) and Ellen Biddle (Director) attended the National Service Training Conference in Springfield, Massachusetts in May. The conference was a regional gathering of Americorps and Senior Corps staff and covered topics ranging from budget management to volunteer engagement.

Meet Your RSVP Coordinators for Chittenden, Franklin & Grand Isle Counties

Susan Abell has been with the United Way since 2012, after working for 18 years at the VNA of Chittenden County. For the last five years of her VNA career, she was the Volunteer Coordinator at VNA's Vermont Respite House.



She has worn many hats here at United Way, first as a Community Impact Team Program Assistant, the Working Bridges Program Assistant, Foster Grandparent Program Coordinator in Chittenden County, and RSVP Program Coordinator in Chittenden County. Susan lives in Hinesburg with her family (two male humans, one cat and one snake) and loves spending time reading outdoors in her swinging chair.

Mary Pelkey is the Coordinator for RSVP in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, pioneering our expansion in the north. She has worked as our Foster Grandparent Coordinator in those counties for 27 years, and has created strong relationships with schools, non-profits, and community leaders.

Mary has been the stable rock through many changes and will continue to be the strong voice of experience as RSVP Coordinator. When not on a cruise vacation with her husband, Mary lives in St. Albans, where she loves spending time with her family.



Thanks To Our Donors

December 1, 2015 to May 31, 2016

Support RSVP and Honor Family or A Friend!

Make a donation to RSVP in honor or memory of a friend or family member. We will send the honoree a lovely card announcing that a donation has been made in their name. Thank you!

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Local United Ways Merge to Form New Organization

Franklin–Grand Isle United Way and United Way of Chittenden County have united to achieve greater impact. The newly formed United Way of Northwest Vermont unites our expertise, staff and resources to better address the complex needs across our interconnected communities.

Challenges facing our communities are not contained by county lines. The need for quality education and increased financial stability, managing the high cost of transportation and housing, treating and preventing opiate abuse and providing adequate care for our aging population are complex issues all three counties have in common.

The RSVP staff has been eager to expand our volunteer mobilization for older adults into Franklin and Grand Isle counties for some time. We are working to make this expansion very intentional and successful. Mary Pelkey, the long-time Foster Grandparent Coordinator for Franklin and Grand Isle counties, will now spearhead RSVP efforts as well. Mary has already built many wonderful school connections through the Foster Grandparent Program and will now help us ease into the expansion, starting by bringing our RSVP school volunteer opportunities (School Buddies and Read To Me) to

a new set of volunteers.

Under the current RSVP federal grant we have created work plans in the overarching target areas of Education, Income, and Health. Here are a few examples of volunteer opportunities that will help meet these specific goals:

- Education—School Buddies, Read to Me, academic and community-based mentoring programs
- Income—Mobile tax prep program, financial literacy
- Health—Aging in place programs, food pantry support, Neighbor Rides, companionship programs

Many volunteers contribute in other meaningful ways—volunteering at museums, libraries, blood drives and more. These volunteers are important to us and though working outside the target work plans, they are still contributing to our grant and the success of our programs.

As we continue our RSVP expansion in Franklin and Grand Isle counties we will be looking to build both our volunteer numbers and our relationships with area agencies, particularly those that fall under work plans in Income and Health.

In Fond Remembrance

We are saddened by the passing of these wonderful volunteers who contributed so much to our community.

*Elizabeth "Betty"
Blaine
Gerry Dupont
Lorraine Laba*

New RSVP Volunteer Opportunities

Check out these new ways for RSVP Volunteers to get involved!

BURLINGTON MEALS ON WHEELS – Drivers and deliverers are needed to pick up and deliver hot meals in Burlington & South Burlington. Shifts are Mon.-Fri., 9:30 a.m.-noon and schedules are flexible.

NEIGHBOR RIDES – United Way of Northwest Vermont needs volunteer drivers to transport seniors and persons with disabilities to and from life-sustaining and life-enriching activities. Drivers from Milton, Colchester and Jericho are especially needed. Mileage reimbursement is available. Background check required.

OMBUDSMAN/ADVOCATE NEEDED – The Long Term Care Ombudsman Project needs volunteer advocates statewide, to work with residents of long-term care facilities. Volunteers make frequent, unannounced visits to local facilities to respond to resident complaints, report serious problems, and provide residents and their families with information. Training and monthly in-service meetings provided. References and background check required.

GO SHOPPING – Cathedral Square Corporation needs volunteers to help residents by shopping for and delivering groceries. Some volunteers may also help create the grocery list. A volunteer is also needed to visit a 94-year-old gentleman who tends to “wander.” Visits in late afternoon or early evening. References and background check required.

NEW HORIZONS – Lund’s New Horizons Program provides individualized high school education for pregnant and parenting women, many of whom have had limited support for educational services. Volunteers will provide classroom child care weekdays between 9-11:45 a.m. A background check required.

MEMORY CAFÉ – The Center on Aging at UVM is in need of new members whose lives have been affected by dementia to join the Steering Committee to help plan and participate in the Memory Café, a social time for those with dementia and their families and caregivers. The Memory Café meets on the 3rd Sat. of the month from 10 a.m.-noon.

ESSEX MEALS ON WHEELS – Regular & seasonal drivers & subs are needed to deliver meals in Colchester, Essex, Jericho, Underhill & Williston. Meal pick up is between 10-10:30 a.m. and routes take 1-2 hours. Schedules are flexible—once a week, every other week or once a month on longer routes.

MAKING AMENDS – Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center seeks to repair the harm done to victims by those who violate the law. Restorative Justice Panel members work as a team to understand the harm caused and the best way for the offender to make amends and not re-offend. They also help create a Reparative Contract to be sure the impact of the offense is understood and amends are made. References and background check required.

IN THE KITCHEN – Vermont Works for Women invites volunteers to bring their kitchen knowledge to their culinary training program. Volunteers in the Fresh Food Kitchen work side by side with a trainee to complete food prep for the next day’s meal (cutting up veggies, measuring portions, packaging product, etc.) 2-hour shifts weekday afternoons.

HOMESHARING ADVOCATE - HomeShare Vermont is looking for staff volunteers to help conduct in-depth interviews with people looking for housing and with others who want to share their homes. Volunteers also call references, complete assessment forms, facilitate introductions, and provide on-going support. Flexible schedule, 5-8 hours a week.

FUNDRAISER NEEDED – Champlain Valley Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in St. Albans is looking for an experienced development professional to serve on the Fund Development Committee which meets bi-monthly to help direct fundraising efforts.

For more information about these and many more opportunities available through RSVP please contact Susan Abell at 861-7823 or email susana@unitedwaynwvt.org or Mary Pelkey at 524-6337 or email maryp@unitedwaynwvt.org.



United Way of Northwest Vermont
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**I'm making a
difference in our
community.**

Make a Difference ... Volunteer With RSVP!

RSVP of Northwest Vermont is a personalized, one-to-one placement service for volunteers 55+ who are eager to do something that makes a difference in their community. RSVP taps the skills and experience of adults 55+ by matching their talents and interests with the needs of nonprofit organizations.

RSVP offers you:

- Personalized, one-to-one assistance from staff who will help you find volunteer opportunities that fit your lifestyle and interests.
- Pre-screening of agencies for good volunteer management.
- Connections to volunteer opportunities that serve a critical community need.
- Info on new volunteer opportunities.
- Social and recognition events with other RSVP volunteers.
- The RSVP Newsletter.
- Secondary accident and liability insurance coverage while on assignment.
- Transportation assistance to and from your volunteer site if needed.
- Documented impact of your volunteer efforts.
- The satisfaction of knowing that volunteering can improve your health.

Contact us today!
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rsvp@unitedwaynwvt.org
www.unitedwaynwvt.org