Meeting Minutes  
Meeting Date: April 15, 2019

Present: Judy Ayers (Grand Isle Food Shelf), Koi Boynton (Healthy Roots), Stacy Carpenter (Vermont Department of Health), Michael Frett (St. Albans Messenger), John Gorton (Sheldon Food Shelf), Melanie Gross (NOTCH), Nina Hansen (Abbey Group), Peter Jenkins (Healthy Roots), Carol Lizotte (Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union), Chris Moldovan (Age Well), Karyn Rocheleau (Rotary – St. Albans), Denise Smith (Northwest Medical Center/Rise VT), Michelle Trayah (Northwestern Counseling and Support Services), Robin Way (Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources), Trish Woodward (Rotary – St. Albans)  
Co-Chairs: Catherine Dimitruk (Northwest Regional Planning Commission) and Robert Ostermeyer (Franklin - Grand Isle Community Action, absent)  
Hunger Free Vermont Staff: Olivia Peña and Becca Mitchell

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Welcome and Introductions</th>
<th>Action Steps &amp; Handouts:</th>
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<td>Hunger Council members and guests shared brief introductions</td>
<td>Action: Share the workshop details with community members (<a href="#">HERE</a>)</td>
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Koi Boynton (Healthy Roots) – Vermont Community Garden Network (VCGN) is hosting statewide Grow It! workshops for garden leaders this spring. There will be a workshop in St. Albans at Northwest Medical Center on Thursday, May 2nd from 4:30 to 7:30 PM. The workshop will focus on utilizing the garden community’s knowledge and resources, leadership and engagement strategies, as well as creating long-term, sustainable plans for a bountiful garden community.

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<tr>
<th>Exploring the Intersections of Health and Hunger</th>
<th>For more information: Contact Stacy Carpenter at <a href="mailto:stacy.carpenter@vermont.gov">stacy.carpenter@vermont.gov</a></th>
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<td>There is a growing awareness of the powerful role nutrition plays in an individual’s health. The Hunger Council members heard from four organizations about the initiatives they are implementing to improve healthcare and wellness through food security.</td>
<td>Handout: Grand Isle Resource flyer draft (<a href="#">attached</a>)</td>
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Stacy Carpenter (Vermont Department of Health) – Stacy is a public health nurse for the Vermont Department of Health, based in the St. Albans district office. Her work focuses on technical assistance and outreach for best practices around preventive health and well-being. Currently, Stacy is working with Katy Davis, Community Health Initiatives Director at Hunger Free Vermont, to connect with Grand Isle area medical providers to include food security assessment questions in their intake through the Hunger Vital Sign. This was validated as a tool by Children’s Health Watch in 2010, administered as a 2-question screening for families with young children. If patients answer yes to one or both questions, this is viewed as a positive assessment requiring follow-through by the provider.

While there is no written prescription that can solve hunger, healthcare providers are recommended to frame healthcare around the whole person. The provider can help to connect the patient to resources in their community, such as 211 which will help direct the individual to help with housing, fuel assistance, 3SquaresVT and more. This resource can be a really powerful tool for providers as well as other trusted community members. Next steps include working with the community to train trusted individuals on how to use the resource flyer. Stacy emphasized the importance of building relationships between medical centers and the community.
The Grand Isle Collective Impact Project has been putting together a resource for organizations and community members to connect with food and nutrition programs. The resource flyer draft was shared with the group. Please send any feedback regarding the draft flyer to Phil Morin at Hunger Free Vermont.

Denise Smith (Rise VT/Northwest Medical Center) – Denise is the Franklin and Grand Isle Program Manager for Rise Vermont, based out of Northwest Medical Center (NMC). Food security can contribute to or exacerbate nutrient deficiency. Denise shared that even marginal food insecurity, which can be related to inadequate household budget or lacking community resources, is connected with poor health outcomes. Many Americans fall short of meeting the dietary guidelines.

This is where Rise tries to intersect. They work with NMC as well as Healthy Roots VT, trying to move from recognition of the issue to action. By using the regional health needs assessment, food insecurity came up as a top issue and priority. There is an upcoming meeting with various stakeholders in the region, including healthcare stakeholders and community organizations to come together to discuss the community health issues in May.

Action is a direction that not just Rise VT but the entire NMC is trying to work on through investing in various programs. NMC is investing in Healthy Roots collaborative to fund food programs, as well as in Rise VT to support preventative care education and programs like community gardens, and nutrition and cooking classes (for example, a cooking class at an Abenaki Center). NMC is investing in staff to work on policy changes and supporting initiatives, such as the expanded school wellness policy at Maple Run. Lastly, NMC is investing in a lifestyle clinic and teaching kitchen focused on diabetes, nutrition education, and health coaching.

Their core work is focused on education and access to food. Rise VT is also intentional about their impact, aiming to work on external conditions focused on built environment and policy, which compliments the work of the greater NMC, working on internal conditions through intrinsic motivation. Overall, Denise shared that their work focuses on balance, moderation, intentional listening, gratitude, celebration, and reciprocity.

Koi Boynton (Healthy Roots) – Koi is the Healthy Roots coordinator. She shared information about the Healthy Roots Rx program, a medically prescribed CSA share. The free CSA is an 18 week farm share program through Blue Heron Farm. The Rx program also provides a Vermont fresh cookbook in addition to basic cooking supplies. They also help to connect folks to nutrition resources.

This program is made possible by collaboration between the Vermont Department of Health, WIC, Northwest Counseling and Support Services, The Blueprint for Health, Healthy Roots, and Northwest Medical Center. Identification of need starts with a medical provider asking the Hunger Vital Sign questions. If screened positive for food insecurity, the patient or family then works with a care coordinator to gauge their interest in participating in a CSA program, which includes their
capacity to participate (can they drive? Is there time to pick up the food?). Families enrolled in the program take both pre- and post-surveys.

In 2018, five families with young children received shares from the CSA program, which provided a share of food every week for 18 weeks. 100% had a positive shift in food security, which meant that after receiving the CSA, they began participating in a federal nutrition program in which they otherwise weren’t already participating. There was also a 100% increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, transportation did not end up being an issue as was anticipated.

This year, Healthy Roots Rx will be offered again at Northwest Pediatrics, as well as expanding to 2 new clinics (Georgia Healthy & Northwest Primary Care), while expanding to a wider population, such as older Vermonters. In 2019, 20 shares will be distributed.

The future of Healthy Roots Rx involves a transition of moving from being a program employed by the hospital, instead to being a program that is funded by the hospital through donations. The resulting reduction in the Healthy Roots operating budget will put the Rx program at risk. Healthy Roots knows that Food Is Medicine is important, so they are hoping to keep that a priority but it will need to shift to a new funding model. Healthy Roots is advocating for the program to become healthcare funded. There is also a possibility of federal dollars to fund the program such as FINI (Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives) but that is not a longer term funding option. A change in Medicare/Medicaid would allow for sustained funding for these types of programs. If Healthy Roots is able to fill their 2020 funding gap and can then focus on raising funds for the Rx shares, they would like to see an expansion to the NOTCH. Another goal is to bring on more farms to participate, but this would require more farms scaling up to join the program.

Melanie Gross (NOTCH - Northern Tier Center for Health) – Melanie is the outreach coordinator at NOTCH as a new part of the clinic called NOTCH It Up! The center works in both Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. They have conducted their over community needs assessment, and as a result, they started partnering with Healthy Roots to offer gleaned produce in 2018. Hundreds of pounds of produce were distributed. NOTCH now has a goal of offering 1000 pounds at each of the four sites (RHC, EHC, SHC, FHC). As always, transportation is a challenge.

NOTCH has a variety of food, nutrition, and cooking programs that they offer. They have been focused on summer feeding for a while, and many families access their sites. In 2018, they were able to offer 1900 free breakfasts and 3070 free lunches over the summer. NOTCH was a summer meal site for dinner as well. They served over 1000 free dinners. While they did not prepare the food, they were able to serve as a satellite site for a summer camp where food was prepared off site and then helped to transport it.

The NOTCH implements various community cooking initiatives, which are hosting in Enosburg and Richford. With support from a Rise VT grant, they were able to offer a cooking class as well as groceries to take home. At the end of the class, they were able to offer cooking supplies as well. By offering The Learning Kitchen, NOTCH was able to bridge the gap between the end of school to summer camp for teens to take part in the program, as well as Grow It, Try It, Like It for the families. Many of their programs are WIC approved activities.
The NOTCH has expanded their cooking class offering to Swanton this spring, with 20 families signed up so far. They are trying to bring other initiatives this year such as holiday and spring vacation events, such as *Taco 'Bout* Being Thankful, *Souper* Leftover Event, and various other cooking events. They also offer health and wellness fairs at various locations (including schools and community centers).

Community partners of NOTCH include Swanton Rec, Abnaki Council, Healthy Roots, Enosburg Community Center, Rise VT, Libraries, and VT Department of Health, and funded by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services).

*Hunger Council members inquired about the best times to offer these free events. NOTCH often offers after school time events, but young families tend to come at many times of day. Response has been a lot bigger than expected, and that is due in part that the classes tend to be low key and creates acceptance around varieties of food and nutrition. Melanie shared that they are very intentional about offering classes in places that are accessible and walkable, which helps to reduce transportation barriers. As a program, they also offer transportation when needed, and recently requested a van through their grant. They are actively working to break down the barrier of access.*

Melanie also discussed that participation was half comprised of families who needed to access food, and half was people looking for community and resources. But as word gets out, more and more people are participating to build community. This is helping to bridge gaps and connect communities.

*Hunger Council members shared their appreciation for Melanie’s work at NOTCH and the capacity that she brings to the community, as well as the trust. Koi mentioned that community meals can be hard for folks to commit to, as well as a little intimidating, but appreciated that Melanie has helped to make the community meals and events more comfortable and inclusive.*

*Catherine thanked the group for their ideas and discussion, and expressed appreciation for the organizations working to make the community a healthier place, as well as for connecting individuals with valuable resources.*

**Updates and Announcements**

*Hunger Council members and guests shared updates and initiatives related to hunger and nutrition.*

*Carol Lizotte (Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union) –* Carol shared that there is uncertainty around school meal sites this year. In 2018, FNSU ran 5-6 summer meal sites, which were in ideal locations. This year, there is a lot of uncertainty regarding where the meal sites could be due to school construction happening across the area. There is a chance that the renovations could be postponed, but if construction does in fact take place, the cafeterias in the schools would be off limits for preparing summer meals.

There is a potential option in Highgate, but that location also has contingencies as there may need to be specific renovations in the kitchen. Carol is hoping that she will be able to use the previous meal...
sites, or find an alternative with a kitchen that is equipped for the needs of serving the volume of meals needed. Additionally, transporting a large volume of meals as well as the capacity and mileage would increase expenses, which Carol is hoping to avoid. A church kitchen was suggested, although the space would need to meet regulations as well as equipment needs. Carol is seeking input and suggestions on where to host meals as an alternative to the schools.

_Nina Hansen (Abbey Group) –_ Nina shared that in St. Albans, they have to 15 summer meal sites. St. Albans served almost 20,000 summer meals last summer in 2018. She will send out the list of summer meal sites as soon as they are out, which will also be on the website. Interested parties can text food to 877-877 to find the 5 closest sites for summer meals, or call 2-1-1.

_Liv Peña (Hunger Free Vermont) –_ As summer farmers market season approaches, Crop Cash is a great program to advertise to community members. With Crop Cash, anyone who participates in 3SquaresVT can use their benefits to double up bucks at farmers markets. Up to $10 of benefits can be doubled per market visit, so when someone spends $10 of 3SquaresVT benefits at the farmers market, they receive $10 of Crop Cash, for a total of $20 to spend at the market. It’s essentially free money to use at the farmers market to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, seeds, maple syrup, and more!

_John Gorton (Sheldon Food Shelf) –_ John, Robin Way, and Michelle Trayah will be leading a workshop at the Hunger Action Conference on the topic of Transportation as a Barrier for Accessing Food Shelves.

_Catherine thanked the group for meeting. The next meeting will be in the late summer or early fall, with the upcoming topic to be decided. Have a great summer!

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For input and suggestions: Contact Carol Lizotte at clizotte@fnwusu.org

Handout: Summer Meal Site flyer (attached)

For more information on Crop Cash, click [HERE](#)

For more information on Hunger Action Conference, click [HERE](#)