

Green Mountain United Way

United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community



www.gmunityedway.org

March 22, 2024

Dear Members of the Northfield Select Board,

I am writing in support of Feed Every Need and their vital role in helping GMUW ensure the health, education and financial stability of all people.

Green Mountain United Way serves Washington, Orange and NEK regions of VT. Our Working Bridges program helps in leading our work to support “the missing middle,” Vermonters working full time and yet still struggling to afford basic needs, like housing and food. We also regularly support individuals and families who are striving to advance both financially and professionally but face the benefits cliff (individuals who work to advance in their career, receive a small raise that amount to \$1-2,000 more per year, but can cost a family \$12,000 or more in lost food and housing benefits).

We work in partnership with employers, including Darn Tough, Cabot Cheese, Vermont Creamery, Central Vermont Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield of VT, and Vermont Mutual Insurance, and more to bring resource coordinators to the work site to assist employees who are struggling with instability, including financial instability and inability to afford basic needs. They provide financial counseling, referrals, connection to assistance programs, tax prep, and many times food. We have found that by using the employer site as a hub connector to multiple supports, including immediate access to food, we are able to directly support people experiencing instability and scarcity, and in turn help to retain and support essential workforces that are the keystone to the stability of the employers in our community.

Our food access programs include grocery cards from our 185 Fund, prepared meals from our partnership with Feed Every Need, connections to food shelves and Veggie VanGo. Food access is essential to people who are struggling to afford food, but it is also an important tool for anyone experiencing financial hardship, because the food budget is often the only place that is flexible. While the rent costs what it costs (as do car payments, heating bills, and other fixed costs), food is a budget item that often has some wiggle room; individuals and families can choose to skimp on groceries to help cover an unexpected bill, such as a car repair or medical expense. We know through our work that hundreds of Working Bridges participants are forced to skimp on food as a financial survival strategy, including families with children or aging parents.

Working Bridges food access programs are supporting low- and moderate-income individuals and families who work for our partner businesses, including single- and two-parent families. Partners like Feed Every Need are essential in helping us support the working families of our shared community and are part of a larger ecosystem of partners who are dedicated to keeping our local economy strong and families healthy, well-nourished, and stable.

Thank you for your consideration and support. Please contact me with any questions or additional information.

With Gratitude,

Tawnya Kristen

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Executive Director

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