



# The Vermont Women's Fund

A Component Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation

Philanthropy Inspiring Vermont Women and Girls Since 1995

June 2009

## Vermont Women Making Change

### The 2009 Holly D. Miller Awards

At the Vermont Women's Fund (VWF) we often ask ourselves how we can measure our success. How do we know that the dollars we raise from our donors and give to our grantees actually make a difference for women and girls across the state?

One way, we have discovered, is through the stories we hear from the field. Each year we ask our grantees to nominate an outstanding participant from one of their programs funded by the Women's Fund for the Holly D. Miller Award, named in honor of the Burlington philanthropist and former VWF council member. The stories told through those nominations illustrate the courage and strength of women and girls from programs around the state who are working to better their lives. This year, we were particularly inspired by the following three young women who were honored at our Celebration of Vermont Women Making Change on May 14 at Shelburne Farms.

**Mary Caldwell** of Montpelier came to **Washington County Youth Service Bureau** when she was in a



Holly Miller (lt) presenting the award to Mary Caldwell

hard place. At 19 she was a single mother of two, working 10 to 12 hours a day at Walmart, and camping out on her mother's couch in a home she shared with several of her eight siblings. "There was no privacy, no time for myself and a chaotic situation for my kids", she said, remembering how bad things were just two short years ago. Even though she obtained a section 8 housing voucher, she couldn't find the money she needed for the deposit on an apartment.

That's when the Youth Service Bureau's Transitional Living Program stepped in with funds from their 2007 VWF grant. Within weeks, Mary had a place to call home and a new stability that she credits with changing her life. "Without my own place, I would never have gotten my high school diploma or a new job.

Now I have time to focus on important things and my kids have the consistency they need too." Today, Mary herself is reaching out and helping others as an Americorps volunteer for the Council on Aging. "Receiving the Holly Miller Award," she said, made me think about where I started and how far I've come."

**Beth Bouffard** had been out of prison five months, but no matter how hard she tried she couldn't find a job. Her work experience in auto maintenance and fast food service just wasn't enough to overcome her recent conviction and a big hole in her job history. Luckily, her parole officer directed her to **Vermont Works for Women** and the Transitional Jobs program, which grew out of a Strategic Partners grant from the VWF. The program was in its initial phases, developing alternative job-training models for women like Beth who were transitioning out of incarceration or off state assistance. In her application to the program she wrote, "I'm a motivated woman. I'm willing to do anything to prove I'm worth hiring."



Beth Bouffard (rt) hugs Holly

Right from the beginning, Beth proved herself through her attendance in the training classes, full engagement in class activities and enthusiasm for reaching her goals. Her background in mechanically-oriented jobs helped her land a three-month part-time position at New England Air Systems, one of several area employers Vermont Works for Women had recruited to hire qualified participants from the Transitional Jobs program. Again, Beth proved that she was indeed motivated, capable and hard working and was hired for a full-time job. Today, she earns a livable wage with full benefits, and is living a full and happy life with her family in Burlington's Old North End.

**Victoria Kuck** knows how to change lives. Over the past four years, she has been part

*Continued on page 7*



The Vermont Women's Fund harnesses the collective power of giving to promote leadership, equality, self-sufficiency and philanthropy for Vermont women and girls.

Our grants are made from an endowment built by gifts of all sizes from more than 1,000 Vermonters.

In 2009, the VWF reached a milestone!

In 12 years of grant making we have invested over \$1 million in 127 organizations statewide, working to ensure that all women and girls realize their potential and building strong, vibrant communities throughout Vermont.

#### Council Members

Brenda Bisbee, North Fayston  
 Emily Blistein, Richmond  
 Cynthia Char, Montpelier  
 Abigail D. Faulkner, East Montpelier  
 Ann Fielder, Brattleboro  
 Cheryl King Fischer, Montpelier  
 Mary Grace, Morrisville  
 Julie Hendrickson, Montpelier  
 Lauren Geiger Moye, St. Johnsbury  
 Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, Burlington  
 Susan Z. Ritz, Montpelier  
 Mary von Ziegesar, Colchester  
 Karrin E. Wilks, Bristol  
 Mary A. W. Williams, Middlebury

#### Honorary Co-Chairs

Honorable Madeleine Kunin, Burlington  
 Honorable Barbara Snelling, Shelburne

#### Staff

Catherine Kalkstein, Director  
 Joanne MacIsaac, Fund Coordinator

3 Court Street ♦ PO Box 30  
 Middlebury, Vermont 05753  
 (802) 398-2300

[www.vermontwomensfund.org](http://www.vermontwomensfund.org)

## Collective Power

By Mary Williams—Council Chair

If you are reading this, you're probably like many women and men who give as much as they can to make the world a better place.



Since most of us have limited resources, we wonder how to make the most of our philanthropic dollars. One approach is to support organizations that work strategically to help Vermont women become self-sufficient, independent and safe, while at the same time creating long term social change that will benefit all of society.

At The Vermont Women's Fund, we specialize in identifying and nurturing groups like this. Here's a specific example: Vermont Works for Women, one of our grantees, has a program called Step Up to Law Enforcement. It guides and supports women who want to attend the Vermont Police Academy, upgrading their academic skills, teaching them necessary interpersonal and organizational skills, and helping them get into top physical shape so they can be accepted by and survive this rigorous course of study. Graduation from the Academy can lead to immediate employment at a livable wage with good benefits and opportunities for advancement and growth.

That sounds compelling in itself, but there's more. It has been shown that when female law enforcement officers are involved, there are likely to be fewer violent encounters between the officers and the public. In addition, it is less likely that firearms will be used. So, the Step up to Law Enforcement program not only allows for personal transformation in the women who enroll in it; it also leads to a more peaceful and safe environment for all Vermonters.

Our role at The Vermont Women's Fund is to research and make grants to organizations like Vermont Works for Women and the other 2009 grantees you can read about this newsletter. It provides our donors with the chance to make a strategic investment in women and girls—pooling and leveraging their resources to make Vermont a better place. ♦

## Invest in Women ♦ Build Strong Communities

Many of us reserve our annual giving for the end of the year, when most nonprofits receive over 80% of their yearly budgets. *But spring is a perfect time to support the VWF or any of your favorite organizations!* It gives us breathing room for planning and budgeting, and it can give you more time to enjoy the busy holiday season. It might also help you increase your gift by dividing it into two installments.

Instead of adding another spring appeal to your mailbox we've included a convenient envelope in this newsletter. Or, you can also visit our website at [www.vermontwomensfund.org](http://www.vermontwomensfund.org) to make a secure online donation.



As always, your partnership is what makes our work on behalf of Vermont women and girls possible.

**Please consider a gift to The Vermont Women's Fund and join the women and men from all walks of life working to create a stronger, more equitable Vermont!**

# 2009 Grant Awards

The Vermont Women's Fund has reached a new milestone! Over the past 12 years of we have awarded **over \$1 million** to 127 organizations around the state. We are Vermont's only grantmaker dedicated to supporting programs that offer women and girls the tools they need to build strong, healthy, empowered lives.

For 2009, our grant awards totaled \$131,294 to 20 organizations. Their vital and innovative programming, along with that of countless others around the state, has a direct impact on our communities and is helping to ensure a vibrant future for Vermont. We are proud to support the following grantees who share our vision for Vermont women and girls.



## ECONOMIC SECURITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

### Have Justice—Will Travel

*"Legal Empowerment Assistance Program"*  
Statewide \$10,000

The Legal Empowerment Assistance Program (LEAP) will offer free long term legal assistance to women in Vermont Family Court who are pro se litigants who cannot afford an attorney. In addition to legal advice for relief from abuse hearings, divorce, parentage, child support, child custody and visitation, LEAP clients will have access to the social services and referrals they need to empower themselves both emotionally and financially.

### The Intervale Center

*"New Farms for New Americans"*  
Chittenden County \$10,000

New Farms for New Americans offers a workforce training and microenterprise development program that works with 30 African refugee women and their families in the Burlington area. The program provides training in business development, financial skills, English language, production, marketing, and local culture; access to land, water, and other farming infrastructure; and marketing support from women who are developing farm and food-based microenterprises.



Photo credit—George Wright

### Kids Are Priority One Coalition

*"Childcare Subsidy Campaign"*  
Statewide \$3,000

To ensure that all children have access to quality child development services, Vermont needs a well

trained and compensated child care workforce. This Campaign works to develop the leadership skills of child care professionals and parents with children who are in child care settings, and coaches them to effectively advocate to Vermont's policymakers around investing in Vermont's Child Care Tuition Assistance Program.



### Mercy Connections

*"Strengthening Connections"*  
Chittenden & Franklin County \$10,000

Expansion of the Strengthening Connections Program Series (SCPS) at Mercy's Education and Transition Center by implementing new satellite programs for women within the corrections system. Through the curriculum of SCPS, women build support systems and skills necessary to make long-lasting significant life changes with a commitment to education and employment.

### Project Against Violent Encounters

*"Project New Start"*  
Bennington County \$10,000

This successful, on-going project offers coordinated and comprehensive transitional housing services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, including financial services, self-esteem-building workshops, parenting classes, educational support, and mediation between landlords and tenants.



## 2009 Grant Awards

### **Vermont Works for Women**

*"Step Up to Law Enforcement"*

*Franklin, Orange, Washington, Chittenden & Lamoille County*

\$7,000



This grant provides emergency funding to enable the continuation of one of Vermont Works for Women's core programs, Step Up to Law Enforcement, which lost its primary funding through the Workforce Education and Training Fund due

to state budget rescissions. The highly successful program offers the nation's only pre-academy training for women interested in careers in policing and corrections – a non-traditional field offering economic independence and numerous opportunities for professional advancement.

### **Women Helping Battered Women**

*"Women's Economic Independence Program"*

*Chittenden County*

\$5,000

A collaboration between WHBW's Economic Justice Program and community service providers, this program works with women who are rebuilding their lives after domestic violence to ensure they have the crucial support and resources needed to overcome barriers to economic independence associated with domestic violence situations. The program provides participants with the tools to meet their economic needs and plan for long term security through financial literacy education and employment mentoring and support.

### **ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICE AND HEALTHY LIVES**

#### **Girls on the Run of Vermont, Inc**

*"Girls on the Run Scholarship Project"*

*Statewide*

\$5,000

Girls on the Run fosters positive emotional, social, mental, and physical development for girls in grades 3 to 6. Throughout the school year, participants work with a female coach/mentor and participate activities and games that promote positive body image, self esteem, self-confidence and healthy behaviors. The Scholarship Project will help

ensure that all girls who desire to participate in Girls on the Run programming are able to do so, regardless of financial need.



### **Greensboro Wonder and Wisdom**

*"Senior Trotters Memory Care Project"*

*Orleans, Washington, Caledonia & Lamoille* \$2,500

The Memory Care Project provides women in rural, northeastern Vermont with tools to increase their cognitive functions as they age. Through a series of workshops and group classes, participants will develop techniques to delay and cope with natural memory loss, helping to maintain their self-esteem, confidence, and self-sufficiency.

### **Lund Family Center**

*"Teen Pregnancy Prevention Outreach"*

*Statewide*

\$6,039

Through a powerful "straight talk" presentation, pregnant or parenting young women share an honest depiction of the reality of teen pregnancy with groups of their peers. The program seeks to reduce Vermont's teen pregnancy rate by changing the attitudes of the young women and men attending these presentations at middle schools, high schools, and community centers around Vermont.

Congratulations to our  
2009 Grantees!

## 2009 Grant Awards

### **Outright Vermont**

*"Gender Bender Thursday Night Program"*

*Statewide* \$9,600

Continuation and expansion of the weekly "Gender Bender" Thursday Night radical queer organizing program, which provides a safe space for Vermont's girls, boys, and gender non-conforming youth to find peer support, serve in leadership roles, and build stronger community support in the most remote parts of the state.



### **RU12? Community Center**

*"Vermont Diversity Health Project"*

*Statewide* \$5,000

Building upon program success from the past year, the Vermont Diversity Health Project will enhance the number and capacity of skilled female trainers from within the LGBT community to increase healthcare provider trainings. As a result, the people most affected by health care discrepancies have the opportunity to actively create change in their own communities, and further the possibilities for reaching providers in all regions of the state. with the valuable information they need to work with and for the LGBTQ community.

### **Westminster Cares**

*"2009 Wellbeing Initiative"*

*Windham County* \$5,000

The Wellbeing Initiative addresses the physical and emotional wellbeing of older women in the greater Westminster area. Programming focuses on issues such as nutrition, strength, balance, aerobic capacity, mental alertness, and emotional health.

### **SAFE ENVIRONMENTS AND FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE**

#### **AWARE**

*"Legal Advocacy Program"*

*Caledonia, Orleans & Washington County* \$7,860

AWARE's legal advocacy program assists and empowers victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence in successfully accessing the legal system to keep themselves and their children safe. Advocates are available to clients on a long-term basis to offer legal guidance, emotional support, links to resources, and to provide transportation and attend court with clients when necessary.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

#### **Friends of North Branch Nature Center**

*"Young Women in the Woods"*

*Washington County* \$4,000

Young Women in the Woods is designed to inspire middle school girls to develop a personal and professional interest in the natural world. Participants will develop self-esteem and leadership skills through a combination of outdoor recreation and hands-on study in the natural sciences.

#### **Girls Move Mountains**

*"Dirt Divas"*

*Lamoille, Franklin, Caledonia, Washington and Orleans County* \$5,000

With program sites in five counties, this summer mountain bike program addresses girls' need for positive role models and mentors, safe spaces in which to discuss and get support for the challenges they face, and engagement in a healthy activity that encourages self-confidence, positive risk taking, and physical and emotional resiliency. The program serves girls age 11 to 15 from diverse backgrounds, with a special emphasis on engaging sedentary youth.



## 2009 Grant Awards

### **Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mtns**

*"Girls Rock the Capitol"*

Statewide

\$5,000

This internship program for girls in grades 9 to 12, pairs women mentors from the Vermont legislature with teenage girls to help them better envision themselves as full members of their state with the power and skill to affect change. Through this hands-on experience, girls learn about activism, leadership, public policy, civic engagement, critical thinking, and women's political history.



### **Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union**

*"Rosie's Girls"*

Bennington County

\$5,000

Rosie's Girls® introduces middle school girls to non-traditional careers for women through experiential learning that increases self confidence, math and science skills, resiliency, self advocacy, and personal aspirations. This flagship program in Bennington County will use the Rosie's Girls curriculum, materials, and training with a unique "Go Green" sustainable energy focus.



### **The Hub Teen Center**

*"Leadership Garden"*

Addison County

\$4,080

Working with a master gardener, teen girls will plan, plant and harvest a garden with the goal of improving the teen center's nutrition program, donating produce to senior homes, and selling additional goods at the local farmers market. Teamwork, self-confidence, leadership skills, and basic job and entrepreneurial concepts will be learned while providing the girls with a unique way to engage with their community. The seasonal project will be documented with digital video and photography for a presentation in Bristol in the fall.

### **Vermont Humanities Council**

*"Women in Need—Seeing the Past and Envisioning the Future"*

Chittenden, Franklin & Grand Isle County \$5,000

This collaborative program will engage 270 women in poverty and other challenging circumstances served by the Vermont women's correctional facility and six social service and educational organizations. Participants gain a better understanding of themselves and their future possibilities reading, discussing, writing, and meeting with the author of *Welfare Brat*, a powerful childhood memoir that illustrates the causes of welfare dependence, generational poverty, and submission to a popular culture that values sexuality more than self-esteem and self-sufficiency.



Photo credit—Emily Nelson and Burlington Free Press


Congratulations to our  
2009 Grantees!

of the CHARM (Children and Recovering Mother's) program at **KidSafe Collaborative**, a recipient of VWF grants in 2007 and 2008. In her role as parent representative for mothers recovering from substance abuse, she has organized focus groups; developed a "Care Notebook" filled with inspirational stories and support resources; developed a mentoring program; organized a book drive to raise money; created a system of motivators and incentives; and spoken to health care providers throughout the state about the needs of mothers who want to get off drugs to raise healthy children.

Victoria's talks are filled with humor, humility, grace and incredible insight and have changed the attitudes of many health providers, allowing them to understand the needs of mothers in recovery in a more personal, compassionate way. The work has also built her self-esteem, and she recently received her college degree in early childhood development while raising her own two children. Victoria says, "I was so honored to get the Holly Miller award because it means that the work I've done has benefitted others. As a parent and an early childhood educator, the health and well-being of children is the most important thing to me."



Victoria Kuck (lt) with Sally Borden of KidSafe.

These three Holly Miller awardees show us just what Vermont women can do when the necessary resources and support are behind them. The women and men who support the Vermont Women's Fund are part of the collaborative effort that makes these and hundreds of other success stories possible. 

## In Their Own Words...

# Changing Lives Through Shared Stories

By Jan Steinbauer

Director of Literacy Programs, Vermont Humanities Council

We learn through both our head and our heart. We learn through experiences—our own and, if a vicarious experience is true and powerful enough, through another person's experience shared via the written or spoken word. We learn, and our behavior changes.

Last fall, in workshops over two days, Mary Childers, a PhD in English now working at Dartmouth College, spoke with women and staff of nine Chittenden County social service organizations about her experiences growing up in poverty. In the preceding weeks, the 188 women struggling to rise out of poverty who

We learn...through another person's experience shared via the written or spoken word.

We learn, and our behavior changes.

words of one woman, "I loved the book. I connected with it emotionally and mentally. It made me want to go back to work, (which I did). It made me re-think how I grew up and how I felt about my mother."

Childers spoke frankly about the shortcomings of "the system," but also emphasized the need for individuals

to make difficult, and sometimes painful, personal choices that better their lives—not only about specific behaviors, but about values and priorities. Mary Childers's comments and her life experiences resonated with her audience in powerful ways. Said one thirty-two-year-old homeless mother, "Thank you SO much. This is the high point of my life, you have no idea."

The group was, as one participant observed, "a very diverse group of poor people", including young mothers, ex-offenders, developmentally challenged women and English Language Learners from Iraq and Somalia. One participant, Meghan, was homeless and pregnant, with her third child born later the same evening that Mary came to speak! The program had an "amazing influence" on Meghan's life, making a real difference to her in tangible ways. She found a place to live and developed a good network of support in Burlington, including friendships with other mothers that grew out of the program from their book discussions and the deep sharing of their experiences and lives.

A series of VPR interviews with Meghan can be heard at [www.VPR.net](http://www.VPR.net).

**The Vermont Humanities Council received a \$2,500 grant from the Women's Fund in 2008 in support of this program, and has been awarded an additional \$5,000 in 2009 for continuation of this work. For more information on Humanities Council programs, contact Jan Steinbauer at (802) 262-2626 x310.**





## The Vermont Women's Fund

*A Component Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation*

PO Box 30

Middlebury, VT 05753

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Barre, VT 05641  
Permit No. 222

Invest in Women ♦ Build Strong Communities

### \$25,000 for Vermont Women & Girls!

#### A Celebration of Vermont Women Making Change

On May 14th, an enthusiastic crowd of 275 people gathered at the Coach Barn at Shelburne Farms to support the work of the Women's Fund and celebrate what can be achieved when women and girls are given the opportunities and resources they need to lead strong, healthy, empowered lives.

It was a vibrant, fun, and inspiring evening, and we are pleased to announce that the event raised over \$25,000 for the VWF and our work on behalf of women and girls. Our sincere thanks to all of the attendees, supporters, and volunteers who helped make the celebration truly special event!

#### We gratefully acknowledge our lead sponsors:

Ben & Jerry's Foundation ♦ Demont & Associates ♦  
Community National Bank ♦ Fleischer Jacobs Group ♦  
Green Mountain Power ♦ Lake Champlain Transportation ♦  
Pomerleau Real Estate ♦ Shelburne Farms

*Thank you for your support!*

### In this issue:

- **The Holly D. Miller Awards—Celebrating Vermont Women Making Change**
- **2009 Grant Awards**
- **The Vermont Humanities Council—Changing Lives through Shared Stories**

### *Help us save resources!*

In the coming year, we would like to start offering an electronic version of our newsletter in an effort to conserve money and resources.



If you would prefer to receive an "e-news" version of this publication rather than a printed copy, please let us know! Visit the *Contact Us* page of our website and submit a form with your name, email address, and the word "e-news" in the subject line. We appreciate your help!

[www.vermontwomensfund.org/contact](http://www.vermontwomensfund.org/contact)