

annual report 2013



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VFN Board Treasurer, Tom Stetton and his son Alex participated in our annual kickball tournament.

From the Heart

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

Thanks to your support, encouragement, and participation, Vermont Family Network has been very successful over the year July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013. As this Annual Report will illustrate, VFN has made a positive impact in supporting the health, education, and well-being of families throughout Vermont, especially those who have children and young adults with special needs. We provided information and assistance 3,859 times across the state, touching every region in some way. Our Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention program served 359 children in Chittenden County and we conducted 144 trainings and support groups for parents and professionals on a variety of topics.

Through our many collaborations we have been able to leverage our resources to better meet families' needs as they define them. We are invested in promoting family voice and choice, from infancy through adulthood, with a focus on children, adolescents, and young adults with special needs. We are dedicated to improving supports and services, and work diligently to ensure that family-driven partnerships advance optimal outcomes for all of Vermont's children. We are integral to the state's commitment to realize the promise of every Vermont child.

As Vermont moves forward with its commitments to holistic, high-quality, results-accountable services to children and families throughout the state, VFN will continue to promote family leadership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services. We are indebted to you for your contributions to our work, and encourage you to share your thoughts and energies with us as we embark on another year of family support and advocacy work. You are invited to volunteer in our outreach, events, Board, committees, advocacy opportunities at the Legislature, and more. Together, we can do so much!

Thank you for your continuing partnership, and we hope that you will enjoy our 2013 Annual Report.

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy, President/CEO

John Koutras, Board Chair



"Vermont Family Network (VFN) is an unsung hero that changes lives on a daily basis. I've utilized their services and seen lives changed as a result of the compassionate, caring, and professional support they provide to Vermont families. Many organizations claim to provide support to families but seldom rise to the level provided by VFN. They are truly an asset to all Vermonters as they tirelessly promote better health, education, and well-being for all children and families, with a focus on children and young adults with special needs."

MATTHEW J. FITZGERALD
WILLISTON

Family Support Program



"This is a whole new experience, but I am getting better at working with the school. VFN's help has been critical and I could not have functioned without them. I love them."

PARENT

VFN's Family Support Program continues to serve as Vermont's Parent Training and Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center. It is through these core programs that VFN assists families of children with special needs in learning how to effectively navigate the special education and healthcare systems. We offer information on laws, best practices, and parents rights in addition to many other important resources.

We are fortunate to continue to have grant funds available to fund respite, support groups, conference attendance, and medically necessary expenses that are otherwise uncovered. We continue to assist families on issues related to transition, particularly the major changes that they may encounter during the transition to adulthood. Our work with the Family Faculty Program continues to receive excellent feedback from presenting parents and the pre-service professionals who hear their stories.

Family Support continues to be a vital part of Vermont Family Network, responding to concerns of parents and family members who are navigating through complex lives and systems. Our staff members are parents of children with special needs themselves. It is this unique peer-to-peer model of assistance that enables us to be thoughtful and effective in helping thousands of Vermont families each year.

ADRC

In December of 2012, Vermont Family Network officially joined the state's Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), comprised of 2-1-1, Vermont Center on Independent Living, the Brain Injury Association, the Area Agencies on Aging, Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and Green Mountain Self-Advocates. We have been working with these partners to create a sustainable national model of across-the-lifespan information, referral, and assistance for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Our Family Support Consultants are employing their expertise as families who have navigated the system to support others in determining their best options. With our family perspective, VFN is breaking new ground for the ADRC, which had been focused primarily on individuals prior to this year.

LAUNCH

In July of 2013, Vermont Family Network began new cross-cutting work with the prenatal to age 8 population in Chittenden County, as part of the Vermont Department of Health/Building Bright Futures State Council Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health (LAUNCH) grant. Building upon the Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention and Family Support efforts with New American communities, we are committed to more effectively reaching underserved families of young children in a culturally responsive way. We will be working with our many LAUNCH partners to build more family leadership opportunities and support, information, and training through this grant, whose goal is for all children to reach social, emotional, behavioral, physical, and cognitive milestones. Healthy growth in each of these areas builds the foundation for children to thrive in school and beyond. VFN is proud to be a partner in this important systems-change work.



NAVIGATOR ORGANIZATION

In July of 2013 Vermont Family Network kicked off its work as a Navigator Organization for Vermont Health Connect. This positions us at the heart of the healthcare reform process in Vermont. We are ready to assist families across the state to make informed decisions about their healthcare needs. In July, while engaging in ongoing state training, we began outreach with the goal of encouraging people to start thinking about the healthcare changes they may be facing. By September the calls were flowing into the office as we geared up for the October 1 opening of enrollment. We are looking forward to working with families to make sure they are able to make informed decisions during this sometimes complex change process.

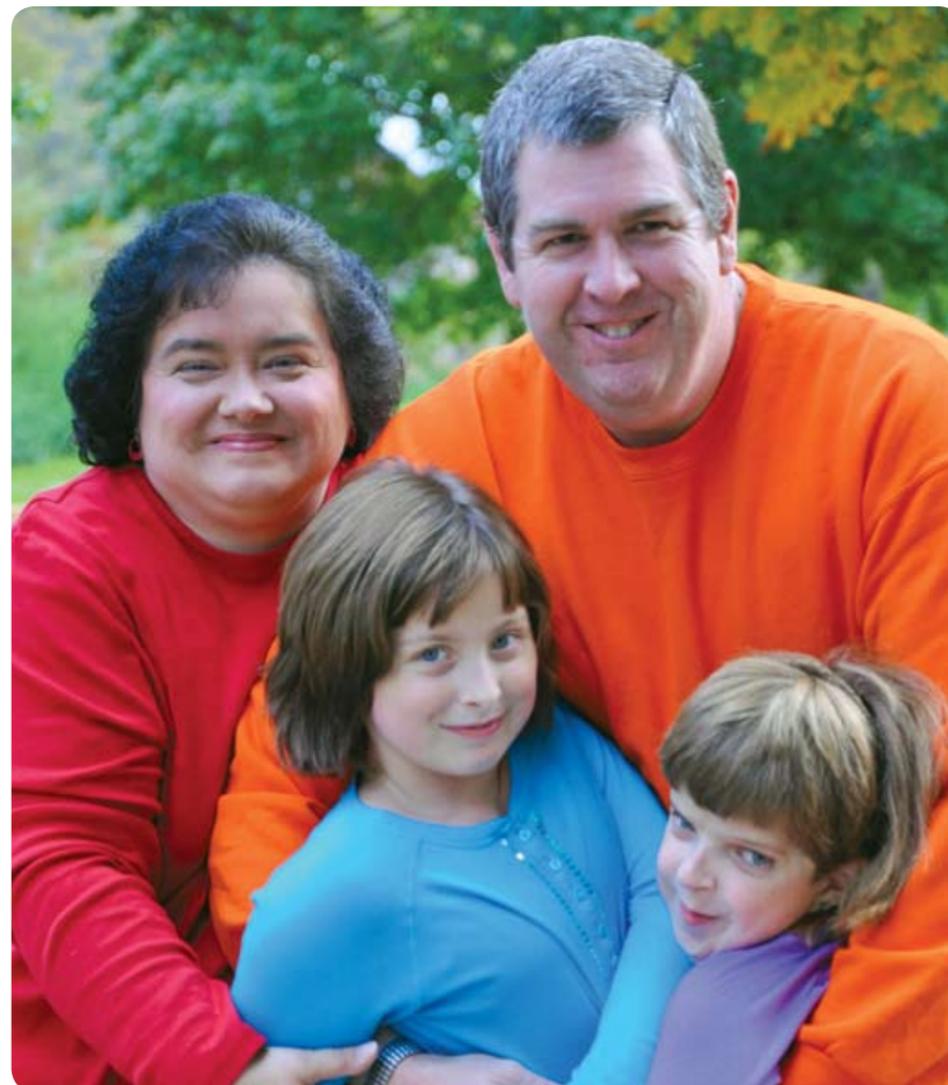
Children's Integrated Services - Early Intervention Program



"I cannot in any way overstate the critically important role that Vermont Family Network has played in Liam's development and paving the way for him to further his development."

BILL, TAMMY, & LIAM MURTAGH
HINESBURG

VFN's Chittenden County Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention Program (CIS-EI) is part of Vermont's statewide system of coordinated services for pregnant women and young children. CIS-EI serves children ages 0-3 years old with developmental delays or health conditions which may lead to developmental delays and provides coordinated services in natural environments, such as homes and early care and education programs where children without disabilities also participate. CIS-EI also facilitates parents' or caregivers' ability to integrate play-based developmental interventions that are interesting and functional into the daily routines of their children.



CIS-EI HIGHLIGHTS

In fiscal year 2013 we served 359 children/families, received 334 referrals to CIS-EI, and served 31 children in our intensive Autism program.

We were pleased to present a talk on "Prevention and Early Intervention: Making it work for families and you" at the Pediatric Grand Rounds at Fletcher Allen Health Care. About 50 medical staff and students were in attendance to hear information about our services, our collaboration with doctors, and to hear families' stories directly from the families themselves about how this partnering results in better outcomes for families.

Three of our staff members received training in the **Early Start Denver Model (ESDM)** from the UC Davis MIND Institute and two are now certified to administer the ESDM intervention. The ESDM is a comprehensive early intervention approach to working with young children (12-60 months) with autism spectrum disorders. ESDM is a developmental curriculum with specific teaching practices for therapists, home/group programs, and parent training. We are now beginning to incorporate the ESDM into our intensive direct service delivery with some of our families who have children on the Autism spectrum.

Our staff received **professional development** including: ESDM, MCHAT Autism screening, writing measurable outcomes, joint attention, considering culture in the screening and assessment of young children with developmental concerns, Howard Center's "Five Positive Parenting Strategies", and music therapy, among other topics.

We welcomed four **student interns from UVM's Early Childhood Special Education program**. As cooperating professionals for UVM, our staff mentored and taught students about our services through direct service visits with families and through work on our collaborative teams. This has been an ongoing collaboration with UVM and we are very pleased to have three of our former interns from years past currently on our CIS-EI staff.

As the **immigrant and refugee populations** grow in Chittenden County, we continue to be involved in providing early intervention services to children in these families. As with every family we serve, we meet families where they are and embrace both the language and culture of each family. We increase our knowledge of cultural norms by attending trainings and staying on top of the newest information about the various cultures we experience.

Our advocacy work with **Vermont legislators** continued last year. Our work with children and families was represented by staff at Early Childhood Day at the Legislature in March and more family "Bright Spot" stories were presented at an evening Building Bright Futures Council of Chittenden County Legislative Forum this past fall.



"I'm really excited to know about these resources. I feel like I've been walking in circles trying to find all this stuff. You just provided it all to me! I'm so grateful. Since my son was diagnosed, it's been a really lonely journey and I haven't had much support from anyone to talk about it with. I really appreciate your time and resources and plan to use them."

PARENT

VFN'S DONORS

Vermont Family Network is grateful to all of our donors for their generous support. We would particularly like to thank the following corporate sponsors that supported us throughout the year. Thanks to their generosity, VFN has the flexibility to help families in ways that are not covered by state and federal grants. This support is vital to VFN's success.

99.9 The Buzz

Biomedic Appliances, Inc.

Center on Disability and Community Inclusion

Fletcher Allen Health Care

Free Press Media

Got That Rentals and Sales

Kids VT

Liquid Studio

MVP Health Care

Oil N' Go

Rutland Regional Medical Center

Select Design

The Essex Tree Farm

The Vermont Lake Monsters

The Windjammer Hospitality Group

The World Adult Kickball Association

UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Vermont Children's Integrated Services - Early Intervention

Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living

Vermont Department of Health - Children with Special Health Needs

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Vermont Agency of Education

WCAX-TV

Zachary's Pizza

A Story of Success

Our names are Barry and Sarah Smith. We are the parents of an incredibly loving and generous boy who makes us proud every day; his name is Elliot and he also happens to have Autism.

We learned about Elliot's Autism diagnosis when he was about 16 months old. We had unsettled feelings that something was off for a few months and got a referral from our pediatrician when we voiced our concerns.

Within a week of talking to our pediatrician, I was contacted by Vermont Family Network and little did I know at the time but they would be one of the most important resources in my son's life and ours as parents.

Elliot was diagnosed with Autism in mid-November and by mid-December he had an outstanding Individual Assistant from Vermont Family Network coming to my house to help get my son to interact. Within a month of that, he had an Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapist, Nutritionist, Program Coordinator, Autism Specialist, and a Developmental Educator on his team, all because of help from Vermont Family Network.

Vermont Family Network did not waste any time. The staff was honest, upfront in what our expectations should be, offered us every avenue available for the type of therapy or methods we wanted to use and educated us on them. They never judged when we didn't like something or disagreed - we were always in the driver's seat for what direction we wanted his therapy to go in.

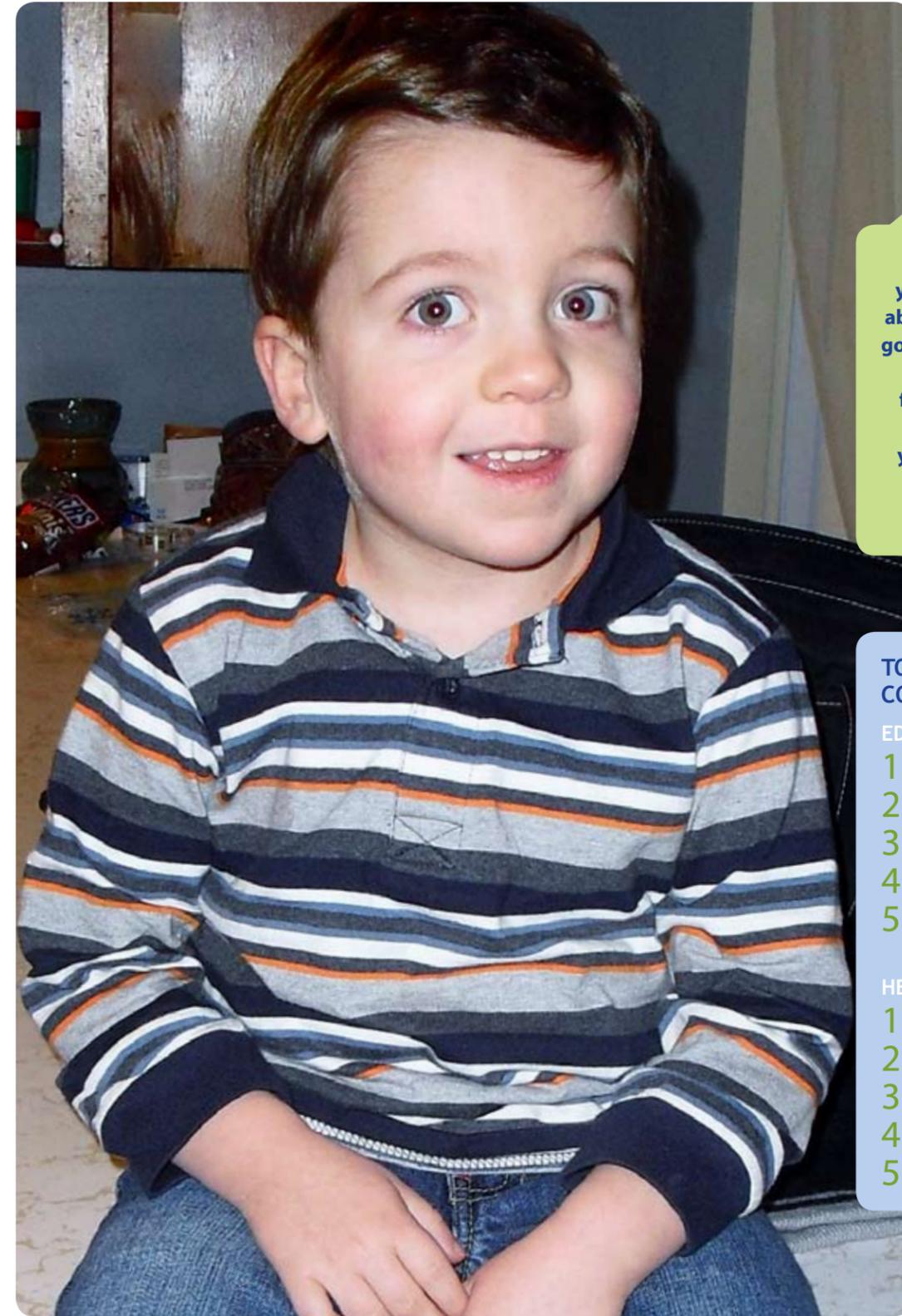
There were times during that first year that Vermont Family Network gave me as much therapy as my child, which is just as important when you are learning along with your child. During those harder times, it seemed like any gains for my son were so far away.

I am happy to report that Elliot is now three and a half years-old and is attending pre-school every day in a typical classroom, with typical kids, with all the supports he needs. His progress is amazing; he loves school and is becoming more engaged and verbal every day.

I will always remember Vermont Family Network. I would have been lost in a maze of "doctors", good and bad, and wasted so much of Elliot's precious window for early intervention time if it wasn't for them. They did all of that for us so we could focus on what we needed to - our whole family health and the best learning strategies for Elliot.

Thank you so much Vermont Family Network - we will be forever grateful.

All our best,
Barry, Sarah, Jaxen & Elliot Smith



Elliot Smith began working with VFN's Children's Integrated Services - Early Intervention staff when he was 16-months-old, after being diagnosed with Autism.



"Thank you so much for your knowledgeable advice about the IEP. You made many good points that I never would have thought about. I do feel more prepared for this IEP meeting. I appreciate your concise answers to my many questions."

PARENT

TOP 5 REASONS PEOPLE CONTACTED VFN

EDUCATION

- 1 Special Education Process
- 2 Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- 3 Parents Rights
- 4 Parent/Professional Communications
- 5 Behavioral Concerns

HEALTH

- 1 Financial Assistance
- 2 Support Groups
- 3 Individual Support
- 4 Community Resources
- 5 Parent-to-Parent Matches

Services by County

JULY 1, 2012 TO JUNE 30, 2013

VFN'S MISSION

To promote better health, education, and well-being for all children and families, with a focus on children and young adults with special needs.

Over **200** Assistive Technology devices, including durable medical equipment and adaptive vehicles, exchanged

568 Likes on Facebook

144 workshops and support groups conducted

304 people participated in support groups

44 parent-to-parent matches made

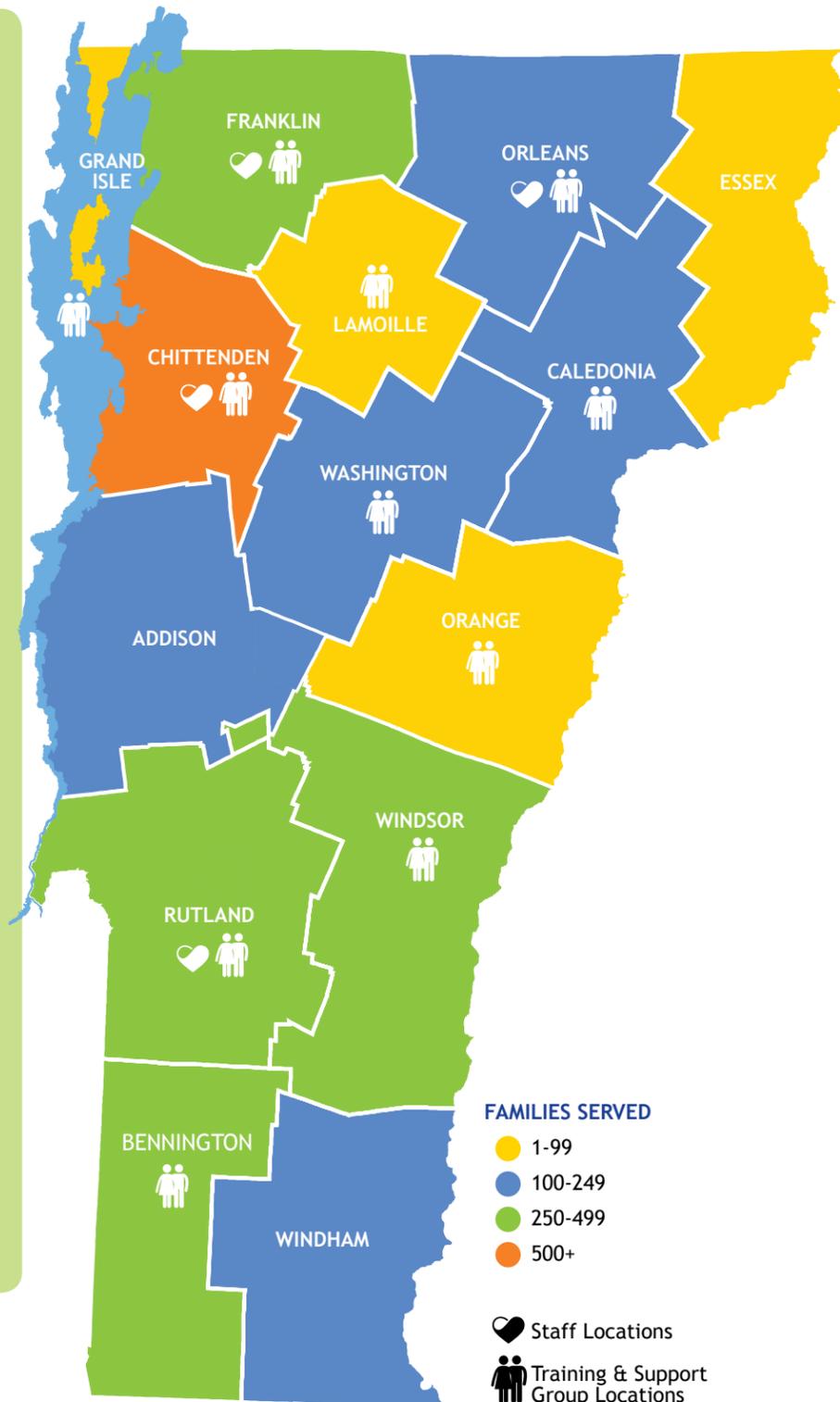
7 Sibshops held

Provided information and assistance **3,859** times

\$43,219 given directly to families to help them meet critical needs

45 parent scholarships awarded to attend our annual conference

359 children served by our Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention program in Chittenden County

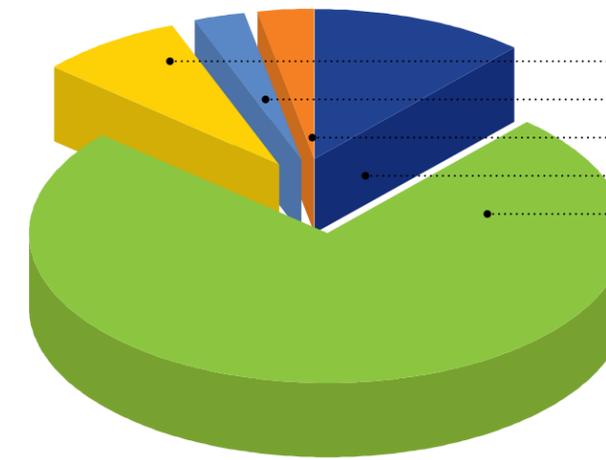


Revenues and Expenses

FISCAL YEAR 2013

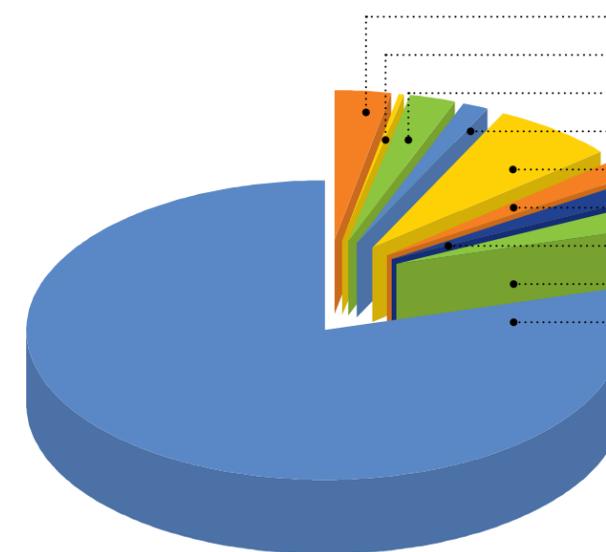
REVENUES

- Fee for Service: \$178,563
- Direct Public Support: \$69,203
- Foundation Support: \$71,822
- Federal Grants: \$273,739
- State Grants: \$1,771,980
- TOTAL INCOME: \$2,365,307**



EXPENSES

- Program Related: \$68,928
- Marketing: \$9,190
- Staff Development: \$64,028
- Miscellaneous: \$32,281
- Facilities: \$155,857
- Travel: \$48,809
- Supplies/Copy/Print: \$44,904
- IT Supplies & Support: \$55,253
- Salaries & Benefits: \$1,851,694
- TOTAL EXPENSES: \$2,330,944**



Leunig's and The Windjammer Restaurant present a check to VFN for proceeds raised during our annual Valentine's Fundraiser. From left: Bob Conlon, Dan Phelan, Jeff Morton, Jeff Bushey, and Sydney Bard.



"I very much appreciate that Vermont Family Network is there and their staff are easy to talk to. The info they provided was super helpful and I felt like I was being listened to."

JENNIFER ANDERSON, MORRISVILLE



Vermont Family Network 2013 staff strategic planning retreat.



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www.VermontFamilyNetwork.org

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