



annual report 2014



President/CEO Pam McCarthy with Champ at the 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, 2013-June 30, 2014. 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 3,154 times across the state, touching every region in some way. Our Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention program served 464 children in Chittenden County and we conducted 43 workshops and support groups for parents and professionals on a variety of topics.

Through our many collaborations with state and local partners, we have been able to enhance our capacity to better meet families' needs as they define them. We are invested in promoting family voice and choice across the lifespan, with a focus on children and young adults with special needs. We are committed to improving supports and services, and work diligently to ensure that family-driven partnerships advance good outcomes for all of Vermont's children.

As Vermont moves forward with its commitments to integrated, 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 invite 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, committees, advocacy opportunities at the Legislature, Board, and more. Together, we can truly make a difference!

Thank you for your commitment to our organization and the people we serve. We hope that you will enjoy our 2014 Annual Report, and that you will contact us with questions and/or feedback at 1-800-800-4005, or pam.mccarthy@vtfn.org.

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy, President/CEO

Kristin Prior, Board Chair



"I'm so grateful for Vermont Family Network and all the people, organizations, and employees who work within or with them. Thank you so much for advocating, supporting, and connecting me and my son with just the right people."

A PARENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kristin Prior, <i>Chair</i>	Laurie Gunn
Kay Van Woert, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Kim Keiser
Tom Stretton, <i>Treasurer</i>	Katie Flanagan Mobley
Ellen Zeman, <i>Secretary</i>	Dan Reagan
Kristen Bigelow-Talbert	Paul Rosenau, M.D.
Jeanine Bunzigiye	Liv Smith-Hammond
Suzy Comerford	Shelly Waterman
Katie Cuttitta	Beth Wilson

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

Pam McCarthy, *President/CEO*

Holly Brooks, *Vice President of Operations*

Rachel Boyers, *Director of Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention*

Lisa Maynes, *Director of Family Support – Health*

Karen Price, *Director of Family Support – Education*

Dianne Levasseur, *Finance Manager*

Family Support Program



“I hoped to convey the importance of partnering with families, respecting their knowledge and expertise, and recognizing the various demands on families of children with special health needs, and how that likely impacts interactions.”

MEP HOST FAMILY

VFN’s Family Support Program has completed another year as the statewide Parent Training and Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center. These core programs continue to allow us to assist families with navigation of both health and special education systems. These complex systems often leave families in need of assistance with understanding laws, parental rights, and collaboration with professionals.

Grant funding has continued to allow us to offer Vermont families opportunities for respite, conference and training experiences, and funding for medically necessary services and products that are not otherwise covered. We work directly with schools and the Agency of Education to help facilitate parent engagement in all tiers of education. We disseminate information to families through workshops, webinars, and printed materials.

Family Support is a vital part of Vermont Family Network’s mission. We listen to families and offer resources, support and growth opportunities. Families return to us several times throughout the lifespan of their children and we are ready to assist however we can. Our goal is always to empower families with knowledge and experiences that will help them to move forward with confidence. Our staff live this as they themselves are parents who, on a daily basis, experience the peer-to-peer model that we share with all families.



Minfang Gong, Zhi Hua Peng, and son Daniel Peng Gong.

CSHN

Our relationship with the Department of Health’s Children with Special Health Needs (CSHN) has continued to grow. With Title V Maternal Child Health grant dollars, CSHS enables us to provide a statewide system of family support, through a support line, informational materials, and support groups. With this funding we are also able to offer ongoing training and education opportunities for families of children and youth with special health-care needs. In the past year we were able to also offer Supplemental Funding through additional grant dollars from CSHN to assist families with medically necessary expenses that were not otherwise covered, totaling \$37,999. Through long-standing collaboration we are able to support families across Vermont in many ways.

MEDICAL EDUCATION PROJECT

Our Medical Education project (MEP) continues to thrive and grow, and is a model for other states. Feedback from both students and family participants is consistently excellent. Over the past year we were able to reach 887 students with the help of 63 different family participants, and our collaborations with the University of Vermont, Fletcher Allen Healthcare, VT – Leadership Education Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND), and St. Michael’s College have all expanded. The demand from local colleges and the University has grown every year and we look forward to continuing to develop this highly valued program.

BEST

Vermont Family Network has been a long-time recipient of the Agency of Education BEST Act 230 grant. This grant has funded VFN’s ability to provide technical assistance, information, and support to families of children with behavioral, emotional, and mental health challenges in order to help meet the emotional, developmental, and academic needs of these children in schools, homes, and communities. Family support staff had 556 family contacts where we provided information about research-based interventions, such as positive behavior supports, community resources, and mental health diagnosis, as well as guidance in navigating the special education and mental health systems. Working with partners like the Federation of Families for Children’s Mental

Health, VFN presented these workshops at our annual conference: “Navigating the Children’s Mental Health System,” “Using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to Support Children with Complex Needs,” and “What You Can Do if Your Child is Being Bullied or Harassed in School.” We also hosted webinars that are housed on our YouTube channel covering topics ranging from “Rule 4500: The Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Vermont Schools,” and “Legal Protections for Vermont’s Homeless Students.” VFN also participated in 2014 BEST Summer Institute to share family perspective with school teams regarding effective supports for students with emotional and behavioral challenges in the school setting and how to enhance positive family involvement.

Children’s Integrated Services — Early Intervention Program

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.



“My son has a team of support without whom I don’t think he would be the same person... I can’t say enough about what they have done for my family and my son... the services have become such a part of making my son the wonderful, smart, and vibrant boy he is today”

STACIE G.

Erin, Brian, Madeline, Jonathan and Peter Monroe.

CIS-EI HIGHLIGHTS

In fiscal year 2014 we served 464 children/families, received 355 referrals to Children’s Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS EI), and served 21 children in our intensive Autism program.

This year we were excited to partner with the VT Department of Health to share resources about the Know the Signs, Act Early Campaign and the many benefits and resources that Early Intervention can offer to families. University Pediatrics, Burlington and Williston pediatricians and medical staff participated in the outreach. This work will continue into FY 2015 as additional medical practices participate.

We have fully incorporated the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) into our intensive direct service delivery with families who have children on the Autism spectrum. 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.

Our staff received professional development in many areas including: Ages and Stages Questionnaire, MCHAT Autism screening, Part C Rules and Regulations, Teaming with Child Care Resource, Mood Disorders in Young Children, Cultural Competency of the Somali, Somali Bantu and Bhutanese populations, Know the Signs Act Early and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy. Many of us attended the annual CIS conference at Lake Morey and participated in various workshops on topics such as home visit safety, strengthening families, and engaging fathers.

This year we focused work on three specific areas of need within the CIS EI program: Annual Professional Development, New Staff Orientation and Training, and Collaboration with Outside Providers. We are off to an amazing start and will continue with this beneficial work.

We were pleased to team with the nine school districts and supervisory unions’ Early Essential Education (EEE) programs that serve our children in Chittenden County after they exit early intervention services at age three. We developed more unified guidelines for our collaboration through the creation of a Regional Agreement. This one collective agreement was signed by all nine schools; a first for VT. This relationship building with our school partners has helped prepare us for the changes to the VT Agency of Education’s Special Education Rules which went into effect July 1st, 2014, including the shift of all initial eligibility evaluation responsibilities from the schools to CIS EI and the need to demonstrate a 25% delay in one area of development in order to become potentially eligible for EEE services. We continue to work closely together to assure that children and their families feel supported through the transition process

“The program has helped me as a mother to learn new and different ways to parent. The program has also helped me learn about the young developing mind and how toddlers think.”

NICOLE F.

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. This support is vital to VFN's success.

99.9 the Buzz
Bio-Medic Appliances, Inc.
The Blue Paddle Bistro
Center on Disability and Community Inclusion
The Essex Tree Farm
FairPoint Communications
Follino's Pizzeria
Free Press Media
Got That Rentals and Sales
Gringo Jack's (Manchester)
Leunigs
Liquid Studio
National Life Group
New England Federal Credit Union
Rutland Regional Medical Center
Select Design
Sneakers Bistro & Café
TD Bank
The Spot
Trader Duke's
Vermont Agency of Education
Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen Health Care
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 Pie Company
WCAX-TV
The Windjammer Hospitality Group
The World Adult Kickball Association
Zachary's

A Story of Success

Our son Sanket, was diagnosed with a developmental delay when he was two. Although his motor skills and physical development were just fine and appropriate for his age, social interactions, language development, and communication to meet his needs were challenging for him. He would not point at things he wanted, could not put his needs in words, and also became anxious around new people and places. Interaction with peers at the day care was also not going well. Sanket preferred to play alone rather than with his friends at the day care. He received services once a week from CIS-Early Intervention just after he turned two, and it was helping him positively.

By the time he was 30 months old, Sanket was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder by the Child Development Clinic.

Sanket is our first born and parenting was new to us. Paying attention to his needs and loving him have always been our priorities since he came into our lives. We are delighted to watch him grow and reach every milestone. But it was difficult to observe that there were certain things which are challenging to him, and that he was struggling with some aspects of his development. As new parents those things concerned us and the thought that often came to our minds was: "Is there anything that we are doing incorrectly?" We often worried about how we could help him to overcome his challenges and wondered if we were helping him in the right way.

Vermont Family Network evaluated Sanket regarding his strengths and challenges and they started early intervention right when Sanket turned two. A Developmental Educator worked with Sanket once a week which contributed positively in building up his skills. In October 2013, he started receiving services daily from the Autism Team which immensely helped him overcome his challenges and build communication and social skills. Jamie Rainville and Casey Barrett of the VFN CIS-EI Autism team were wonderful in understanding Sanket's needs and helping him gain skills in areas that were delayed.

VFN helped us to be more aware of Sanket's challenges and how to work around it to improve his situation. Every person on the team was immensely helpful in answering questions, excellent in their work, and they built up a strong relationship with Sanket. He loved them and looked forward to playing and interacting with them. We would like to especially thank Casey Barrett, Jamie Rainville, Chelsea Gray, and Laurel Sanborn for their patience, care, and support. Thank you all for everything. Their support has helped Sanket to overcome challenges considerably. Each day he does something new and that has started since he came in touch with the awesome team of VFN. He goes to preschool now and he absolutely loves it!

We thank you from all our heart for your support and care. Our experience with you all has been very positive and encouraging. Your insights and suggestions has helped us as parents in giving Sanket positive reinforcement in the steps that he is taking every day to go from one milestone to another. The help we received has steered our child in right direction. Thank you so much! – Suryatapa Jha & Hira Nand



Sanket enjoying pool time with Casey Barrett.



"It was totally our privilege to get to work with VFN... The start our son has gotten will no doubt lead to his success for years to come. He got on that bus this morning and never looked back, what an incredible transition! Thank you for all the help and support you and VFN have given to us in these short months."

A PARENT

TOP 5 REASONS PEOPLE CONTACTED VFN

EDUCATION

- 1 Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- 2 Parents' rights
- 3 Special education evaluation
- 4 Parent/professional communications
- 5 Special education process

HEALTH

- 1 Health/medical concerns
- 2 Family issues
- 3 Funding
- 4 Healthcare financing
- 5 Respite

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 **258** assistive technology devices, including durable medical equipment and adaptive vehicles, exchanged

763 likes on Facebook

43 workshops and support groups conducted

79 people participated in support groups

7 Sibshops held

18 live webinars conducted

Provided information and assistance **3,154** times

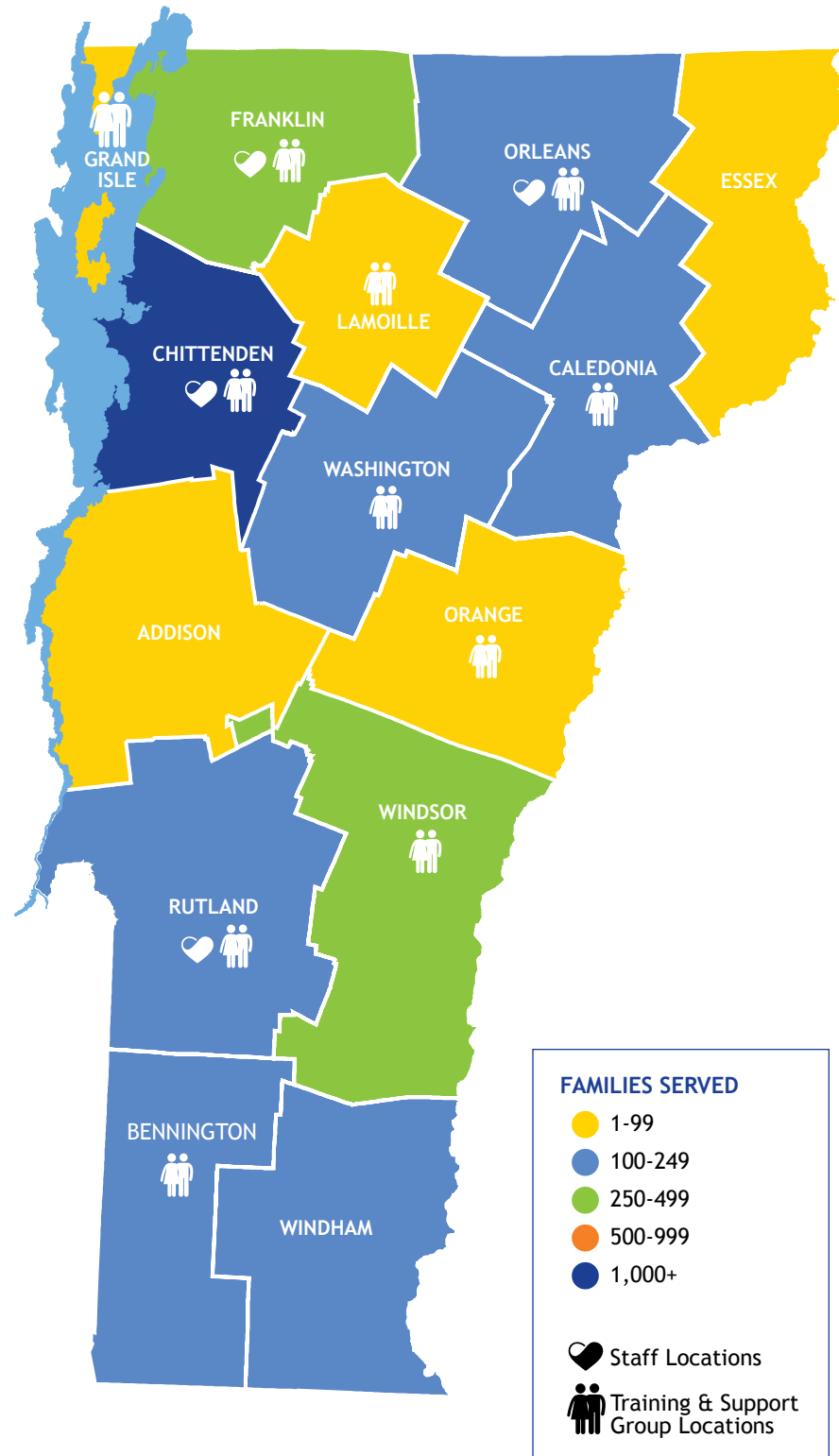
\$61,307 given directly to families to help them meet critical needs

48 parent scholarships awarded to attend our annual conference

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

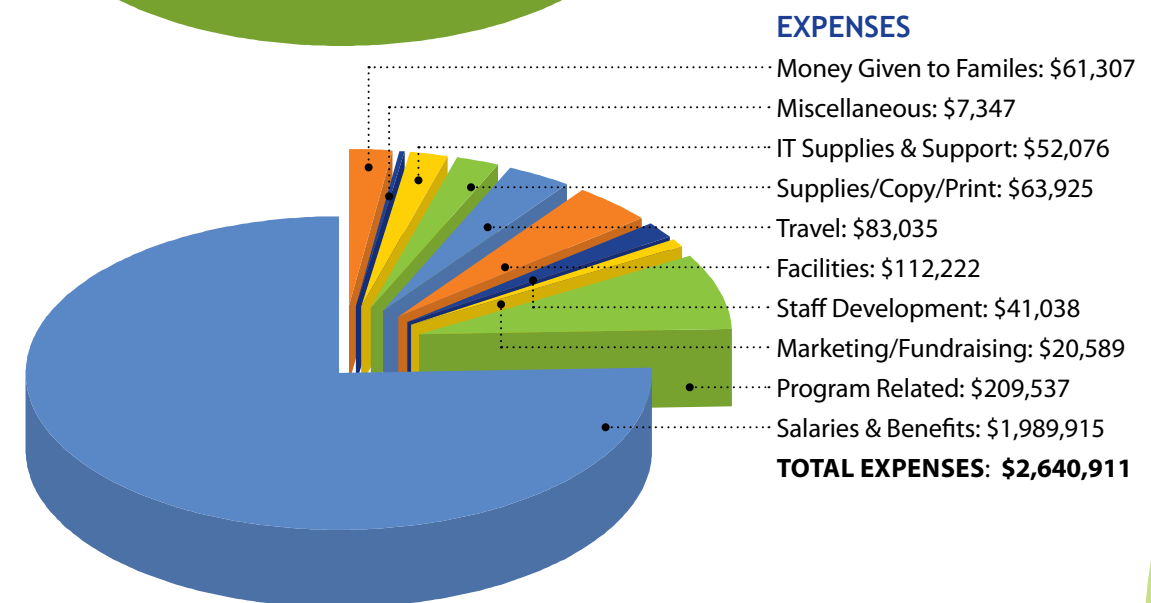
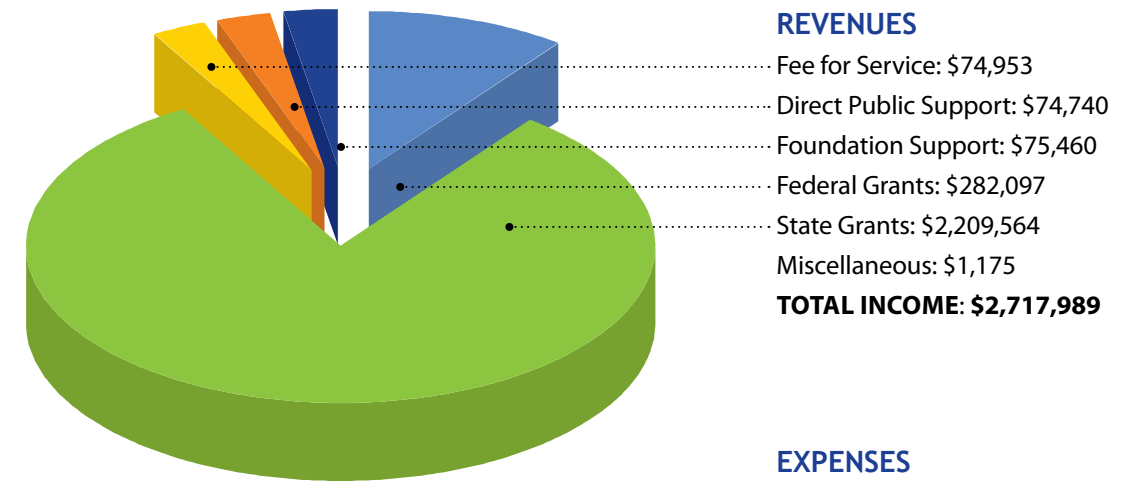
Over **500** people assisted with Vermont Health Connect by our Healthcare Navigators

SERVICES BY COUNTY – July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014



Revenues and Expenses

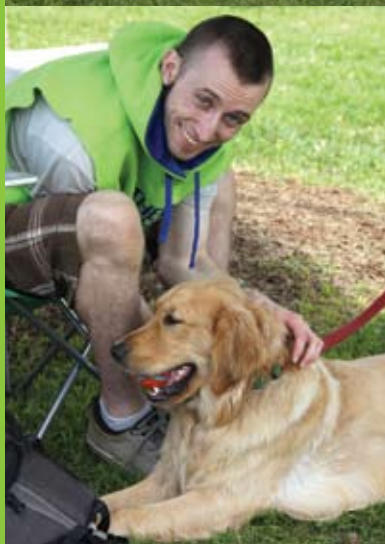
FISCAL YEAR 2014



THE JOE SHOOK MEMORIAL FUND is designed to serve families who self-identify unexpected, emergent needs associated with a child with special needs that are not funded by other sources. The fund is named for Joe Shook who died at 20 years of age on June 25, 2011 following a seizure. Joe is the son of long time VFN employee Liz Jordan-Shook. Monies for the Joe Shook Memorial Fund come from donations from VFN employees, external contributors, and fund raising efforts. During FY14 the Joe Shook Memorial Fund disbursed \$2,200 to 22 families.

"This fund helped us reduce our family burden for a language program visit to Boston. It is an encouragement and support for us to fulfill the very important appointment. I truly appreciate the Joe Shook Fund Committee."

ZHIHUA P.



Clockwise from top left: Winning family team at the 2014 Kickball Tournament. VFN staff at staff picnic. Kristin and Tilly McCarthy. Restaurant Week check presentation at Leunig's. Matt Swarley, author of *My Cancer Card*, with his dog at the VFN Kickball Tournament.



600 Blair Park Road, Suite 240
Williston, VT 05495-7549
1-800-800-4005

www.VermontFamilyNetwork.org