

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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Pam McCarthy, President/CEO of Vermont Family Network with Lillie Bean Gerry

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

What a remarkable year we have had, serving families of children with special needs and the professionals who serve them across the state of Vermont. Thanks for your encouragement and investment in Vermont Family Network! Together, we have accomplished a great deal, and we are proud to share some of this year's achievements with you. Of note, our staff and board spent focused time reflecting on our mission and vision, and emerged with a new sense of purpose, as well as clearer statements about who we are and how we make a unique difference.

As this Annual Report for July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015 will illustrate, VFN has made a positive impact in empowering and supporting families of children with special needs throughout Vermont. We provided information and assistance 4320 times across the state, touching every region in some way. This year, we directly served 1024 families and 439 professionals. Our Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention program served 446 children in Chittenden County and we conducted 30 workshops and 15 webinars for parents and professionals on a variety of topics. Our Family Faculty trained 453 medical and education professionals, utilizing the skills of 25 family members expert in caring for their own children with special needs. We have greatly improved our outreach and support of new American families, connecting with many diverse communities in ways that are more culturally and linguistically accessible.

We are fortunate to have many strong partnerships with individuals and organizations across the state – through them, we are able to enhance our capacity to meet families' identified needs. VFN promotes family leadership in all aspects of our work. We believe strongly in family voice and the strengths and gifts of people with disabilities. We believe that everyone can make a difference. We believe that when we support one another, we bring out our individual and collective best.

Your input is key to supporting great outcomes for children with special needs of all ages throughout the state. We welcome you to volunteer in our outreach, events, committees, advocacy opportunities at the Legislature, Board, and more. Together, we will continue to create measurable impact as Vermont's "go-to" resource for families of children with special needs.

Thank you again for your commitment to our organization and the people we serve. We hope that you will enjoy our 2015 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



The Ostrout Kids

“Without VFN, I doubt we’d be where we are today. I don’t know what I would have done without VFN’s services or support...They taught me how to be strong for my son and how to be an advocate for him which has turned out to be one of the greatest gifts a family could ask for.” PARENT

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

VFN’s Family Support Program has completed another year as the statewide Family-to-Family Health Information Center and Parent Training and Information Center. These core programs 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.

Through grant funding we offer Vermont families opportunities for respite, conference and training experiences, and medically necessary services and products that are not otherwise covered. We work directly with schools and the Vermont Agency of Education

to help facilitate parent engagement in all tiers of education and 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 of children with special needs return to us several times throughout their children’s lives 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. As experienced parents of children with special needs, our staff is uniquely qualified to achieve this goal.



Ashley and Jacob Christie

“An amazing resource to Vermont families of children with special needs. Amazing support for families just beginning the journey and a knowledgeable resource for those dealing with transitions.” PARENT

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.

In FY15, we served 446 children/families, received 368 referrals to Children’s Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS-EI), and served 14 children in our intensive Autism program.

CIS-EI FY 2014 FAMILY OUTCOMES

Our FY 14 CIS EI Family Outcomes Survey showed that:

84% of parents reported that early intervention services have helped them know their parental rights.

90% reported that early intervention services have helped their family effectively communicate their child’s needs.

85% reported that early intervention services have helped their family help their children to develop and learn.

Our Child Outcome Summary results showed that children served through our CIS EI program were above the state target for those who have substantially increased their rate of growth in the areas of positive social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.



The Gabert Family

“One of the most meaningful aspects of my work here is having the opportunity to offer families a new perspective — a strength-based, hopeful perspective. Often when we first meet families they are amidst very challenging experiences, and I find it very rewarding to support them through these challenges.” VFN CIS-EI STAFF

A STORY OF SUCCESS

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing to you. My son, Clark, is turning 3 in a few days. Today will be the last day he has services with Kathleen Fitzgerald: his teacher, friend, and someone that he believes is part of our family. Let's be honest – she is.

When we first started this journey February 2014 I was completely unsure about what was going to happen and the future of my son. He was 18 months and he wasn't using language like his twin brother or pretend play or even looking at us when we called his name. I was so frightened for his future.

Suddenly, Clark had a team of people. It started with Eileen McCoy – who put up with my behavior and then came Kathleen, Jamie Rainville, Lisa Cannizarro, and Melanie Pope for OT. I have never been more impressed with a group of people like I have been with these women. We met monthly and shared how much progress Clark was making and it really became self-evident that they figured out what worked to help Clark learn.

Today he is “high functioning” according to the CDC and I am no longer worried about the future for my son. With their guidance and support I've come to realize that Clark is not only sweet but he's also unique and brilliant. His language has exploded and he is speaking like a four year old. He is able to communicate, memorizes books and puzzles, uses expressive faces, makes jokes, pretend plays, and is one of the best kids around.

I don't know where Clark would be without the women listed above and I know our lives have changed for the better because of it. I hope you appreciate them as much as we do and will continue to keep them as part of our family forever.

Sincerely, Stacie Gabert



The 2015 Vermont Leadership Series graduating class

“Interacting with others broadened my perspective beyond my own situations, spurred idea sharing and team building, and inspired me. I am not alone in this journey, and my voice matters.”

2015 VERMONT LEADERSHIP SERIES PARTICIPANT

THE VERMONT LEADERSHIP SERIES

In partnership with the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, UVM's Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, and Green Mountain Self Advocates, VFN created a unique opportunity to develop family voice and individual advocacy. This new collaborative effort exemplifies our mission to empower and support all Vermont families of children with special needs. Eighteen family members and individuals with disabilities from the southernmost to the northernmost ends of the state participated. Parents who took part had children of various ages, and the cohort included a wide variety of diagnostic experiences. Participants attended three weekends of intensive training highlighted

by group activities and well-known guest speakers. The Series culminated in a graduation ceremony at the Statehouse with the Speaker of the House giving a keynote address to the graduates and the Treasurer of the State of Vermont presenting diplomas.

Several graduates from this Leadership Series are committed to being mentors for future leadership trainees and many of them have already assumed new leadership roles. The partners who funded the Leadership Series are eager to continue this exciting work and grow our capacity for family engagement and self-advocacy across Vermont.



“VFN supports families where they are at to meet the unique challenges they face, to build the network they need for improved quality of life outcomes.”

EXTERNAL PARTNER

LISTENING TO THOSE WE SERVE

In the spring of 2015, VFN conducted a survey of families and partner agencies. We received 199 family responses and 50 partner responses which highlighted Information, Referral, and Assistance as the service most utilized and most valued. Families' second most valued VFN service was flexible funding that meets family-identified needs.

FUNDING ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES

VFN Conference: \$4,720

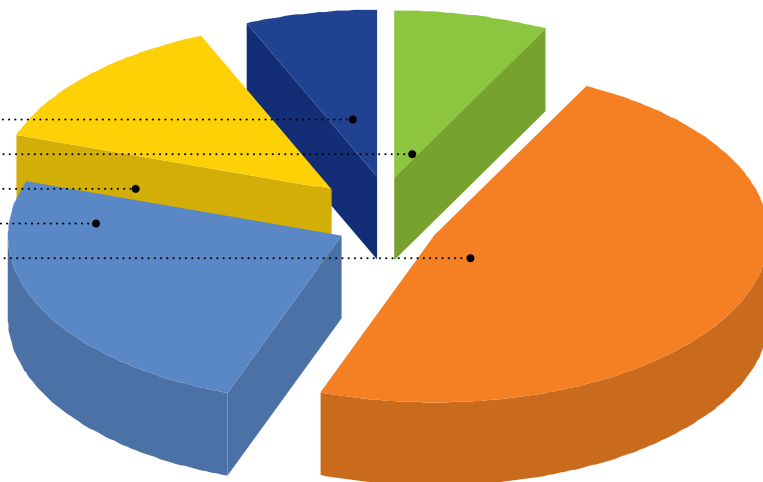
Summer Camp Assistance \$5,700

Education Related to Diagnosis: \$10,141

Respite: \$18,700

Medically Necessary Uncovered: \$36,019

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$75,280

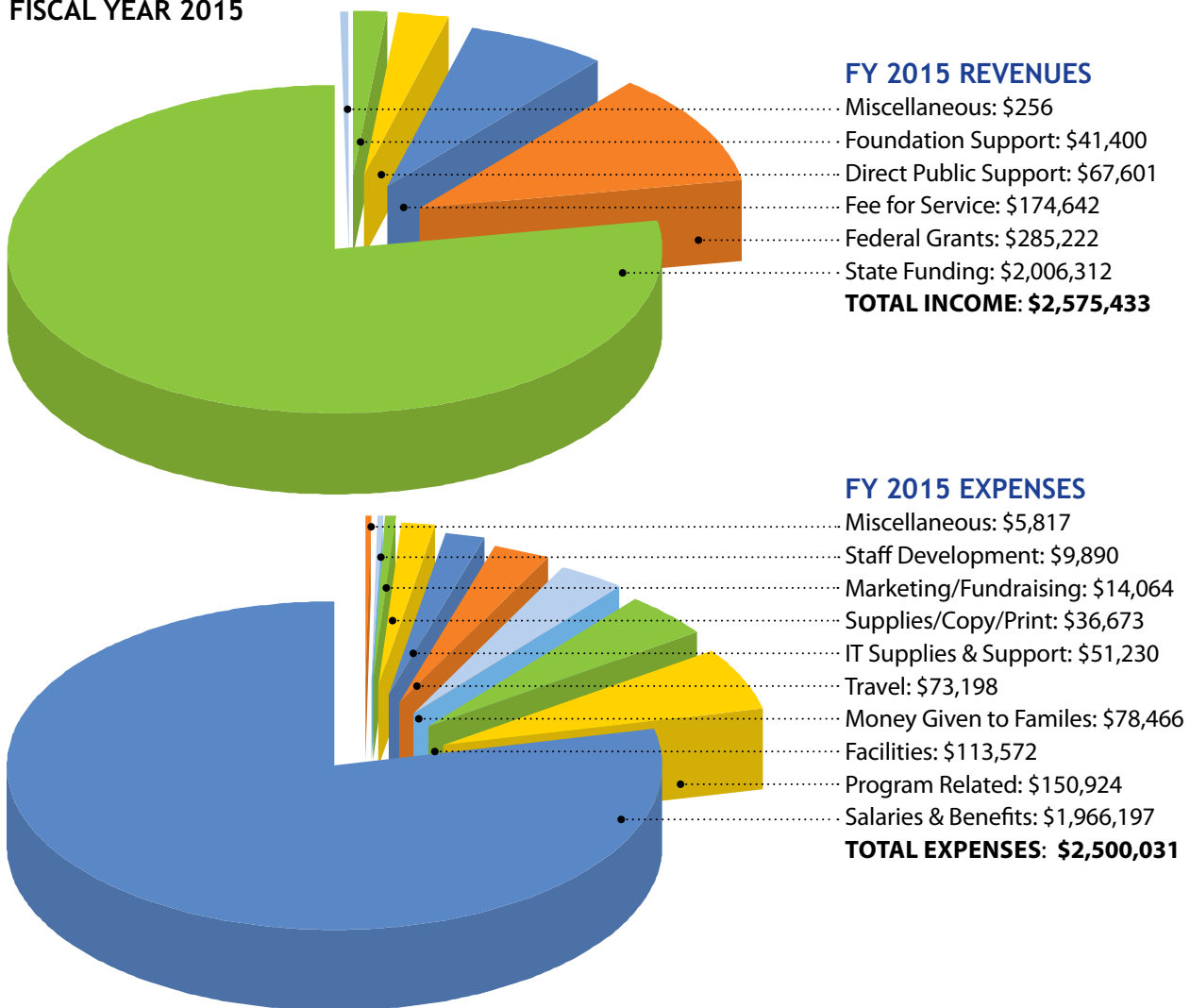




Kickball players enjoy the day at the Windjammer's Annual Kickball Tournament to benefit VFN

REVENUES AND EXPENSES

FISCAL YEAR 2015



TOP REASONS PEOPLE CONTACTED VFN

1

Education:
Individualized Education
Program & Individual
Family Service Plan

Health:
Funding

2

Education:
Parent/professional
communications

Health:
Mental health

3

Education:
Parents' rights in special
education

Health:
Respite

4

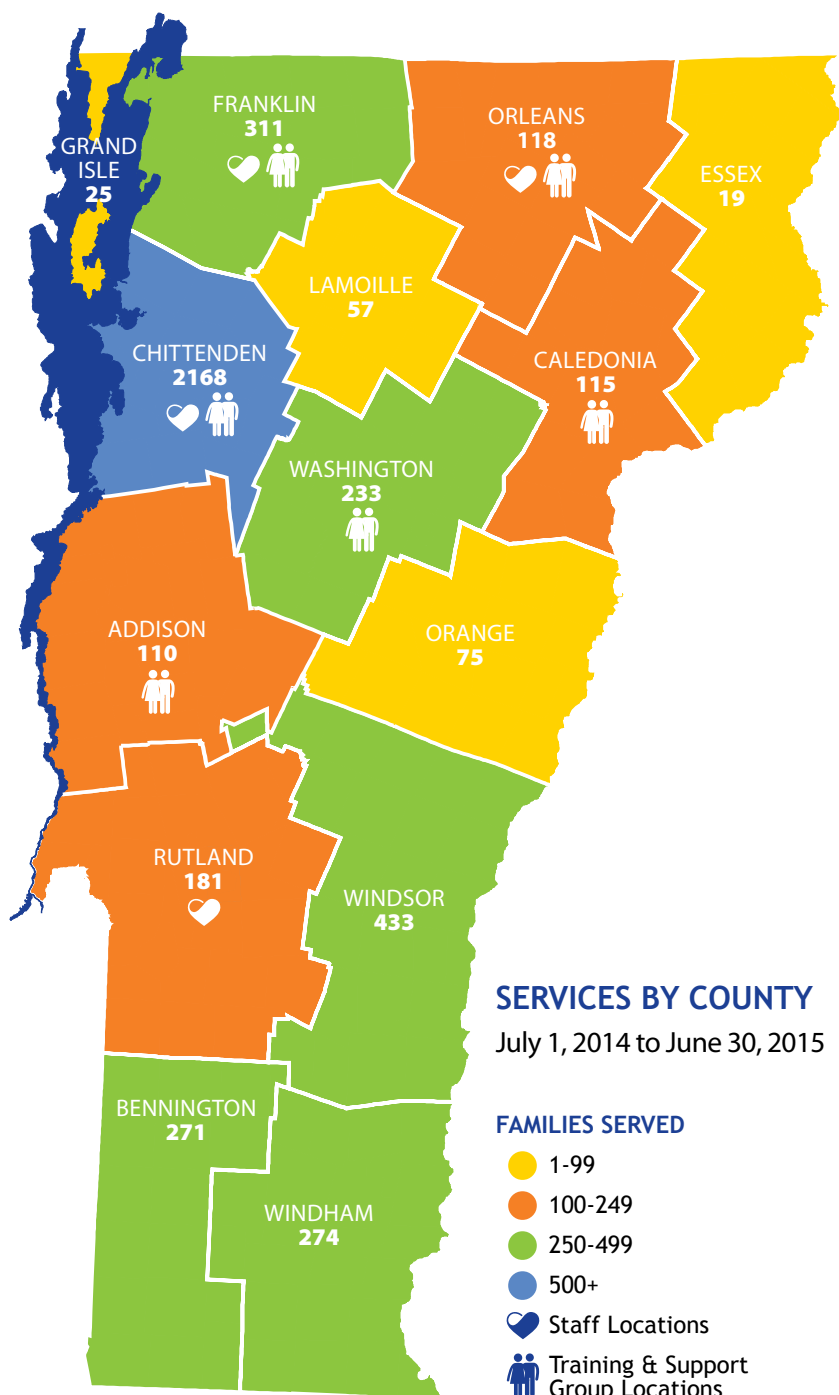
Education:
Behavior

Health:
Family challenges

5

Education:
Special education
evaluation

Health:
Disability-specific



**VFN'S MISSION: TO EMPOWER AND
SUPPORT ALL VERMONT FAMILIES
OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.**

“VFN supports people with disabilities by engaging, educating, and advocating with and for their families.”

EXTERNAL PARTNER

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	Ramunto's Brick Oven Pizza
Aplomb Consulting	Rutland Regional Medical Center
Archie's Grill	The Scuffer Steak & Ale House
The Automaster	Select Design
Belles Café	Shelburne Vineyard
Bio-Medic Appliances, Inc.	Simply Divine
BlueCross BlueShield of Vermont	Sneakers Bistro & Café
Center on Disability and Community Inclusion	The Spot
Essex Grill	TD Bank
The Essex Tree Farm	The Three Tellers
FairPoint Communications	Trader Duke's
Folino's Pizzeria	University of Vermont Children's Hospital
Free Press Media	University of Vermont College of Nursing & Health Sciences
El Gato Cantina	Vermont Children's Integrated Services – Early Intervention
Got That Rentals and Sales	Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living
Grazers	Vermont Department of Health – Children with Special Health Needs
Green Mountain Mahler Festival	Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
Gringo Jack's (Manchester)	Vermont Tap House
Howard Center	WCAX-TV
Leunigs Bistro & Café	Williston House of Pizza
Liquid Studio	The Windjammer Hospitality Group
Main Street Landing	The World Adult Kickball Association
McGillicuddy's Irish Ale House	Zachary's Pizza
Mexicali Grill & Cantina	
National Life Group Foundation	
New England Federal Credit Union	

910 likes on Facebook and 205 followers on Twitter
30 workshops and 15 live webinars conducted

**97 siblings of kids with special
needs attended 9 Sibshops**

26 people participated in 5 support groups

Provided information and assistance 4,320 times

\$78,466 given directly to families to help them meet critical needs

**54 parent scholarships awarded
to attend our annual conference**

Over 500 people assisted with VT Health
Connect by our Healthcare Navigators

446 children served by our Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention
program in Chittenden County (including 14 in our Autism Team)

Our Family Faculty trained 453 medical and education
professionals, utilizing the skills of 25 family members



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

1-800-800-4005

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