



# Neighborhood News

June 2022

The latest news from Neighborhood Connections

Please visit [www.neighborhoodconnectionsvt.org](http://www.neighborhoodconnectionsvt.org)

## 2021 Funding Facts!

67% of our income came from local donors and area businesses!

We had 115 new donors in 2021

Our largest donor category was \$100—\$250



## NEED A RIDE?

Call our office to schedule 824.4343

## A Day in the Life of a Social Worker

A social worker is someone who helps people prevent and cope with social, economic, emotional, and behavioral challenges in their daily lives. Social workers, like our beloved Retta Murphy, have an enormous impact on individuals and communities, providing social services, education, advocacy, counseling, and so much more.

But what does a social worker do on a typical day? While a typical day for a social worker at Neighborhood Connections really doesn't exist, following NC Social Worker Retta Murphy around for a day illustrates the importance of flexibility and adaptation. Here's how it goes:

Retta arrives at the office at 9am, and as usual, a client is waiting for her. Today she helps this client fill out some tricky health insurance paperwork. Mid-morning, Retta loads her car with meals prepared by local restaurants participating in the

*Everyone Eats* program. She first stops at Smith Haven apartments, where she makes weekly deliveries to each resident – many of whom are older folks, some with disabilities. Not only does this delivery address food insecurity, it also allows Retta to check in with everyone one by one. If she finds a need, the resident is encouraged to make an appointment to come into the office. The Mountain Town Connector, our wheelchair-accessible van, can pick them up should they need a ride. While there, Retta distributes flyers inviting folks to Games & Goodies, a fun social event at Neighborhood Connections. (continued on next page)



## Need Health Insurance?

*Need health insurance? We can help! Neighborhood Connections has been awarded funds to ensure Vermonters have access to health insurance. Stay tuned for upcoming informational events. To make an appointment with a social worker, call 802-824-4343.*

*¿Necesita un seguro médico? ¡Podemos ayudarle! Neighborhood Connections ha percibido fondos para dar alcance y brindar acceso a un seguro médico en Vermont, para aquellos habitantes que no cuenten con un seguro. Esté atento a los próximos eventos informativos. Para hacer una cita con un trabajador social, llame al 802-824-4343.*



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- Retta Murphy  
Social Worker
- Maggi Royle  
Finance Manager
- Katey Doyle  
Social Worker
- MC Schwartz  
Program Director
- Elisa Donato  
Outreach &  
Development
- Buddy Stevens  
Transportation

**We Are Pleased to Introduce New Staff Members**

**Katey Doyle, Social Worker**

Katey joined the organization in December, 2021 as a full-time Social Worker after earning her Master of Social Work degree from the University of New England. She relocated from Alaska in 2017, where she was raised on Kodiak Island. She lives in Windsor County with her fiancée, Melissa, and their two beautiful daughters.



**Pat Roberts, Front Desk**

Many in the community know Pat from her 35 year stint at Mountain Valley Health Center. After her retirement from there, she joined our volunteer staff. She has been hired as our front desk assistant for 5 mornings a week and we are thrilled to have her here!

**Welcome, Mark Reffner—our newest board member!**



**A Day in the Life** continued from front

**Next, Retta heads over to a local emergency housing shelter where she drops off meals to people experiencing homelessness. As with Smith Haven, this gives her the chance to check in and make appointments with the residents. Being homeless is destabilizing and can feel demoralizing. Retta offers support and stability during a difficult time in their lives. Affordable housing is a challenge for many, and while Retta can't solve that problem single-handedly, she does her best. That might mean helping a client navigate housing applications, advocating for clients seeking housing, helping someone move into an assisted living facility, or helping to pay rent and moving costs.**

**Around 1pm, Retta returns to the office where she unexpectedly meets with an individual experiencing a mental health crisis. She immediately makes room in her schedule to help the client cope with the situation and makes plans to connect her to the resources she needs. At 4pm, she has a counseling session with a local elementary school student, helping him identify and respond to his social and emotional needs.**

**This was just one day in the life of a Neighborhood Connections social worker. Tomorrow will be a different day with new challenges and rewards. The one thing we know for sure is that no matter what the day brings, Retta always goes above and beyond to help.**

# Staying Connected

**Our mission at Neighborhood Connections is to promote the health and well-being of the people in Southern Vermont’s mountain towns through advocacy, education, and social services.** We know that staying connected to others is essential for health and well-being. Living in our rural mountain towns can feel isolating, especially during the long Vermont winters. Throw in a global pandemic and you have the potential for no meaningful social contact at all.

Social isolation is a health concern known to increase the risk of physical and mental health problems. In rural locations such as ours, being isolated can make it more difficult to get to necessities like food and health care, not to mention recreational activities. Because we know how important it is to stay connected, we have staff, volunteers, and special programs in place to make it happen.



**Mountain Town Connector** – Transportation is essential to connection. Without the option of public transit, it is necessary to be resourceful. In November of 2021, Neighborhood Connections launched a long-awaited transportation program and unveiled the Mountain Town Connector, our wheelchair-accessible van. The program has been growing since, with the number of riders increasing monthly and our group rides becoming more popular. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, a group of eight (photo above) went on an outing to Manchester for lunch at Charlie’s and shopping at the Northshire Bookstore.

**Friends & Neighbors** – Some members of our community are essentially home-bound, due to illness, injury, or a variety of other reasons. Some live alone or with a family member but don’t get much chance to socialize with friends. That’s where our volunteers come in! Friends & Neighbors matches volunteer “friends” with senior “neighbors” for weekly social visits at home. Friends can chat, share a coffee or tea, play games, go for a walk, and even bring their neighbors to enjoy fun group activities at Neighborhood Connections.



**Games & Goodies** – Our regular Games & Goodies Gathering brings folks together to enjoy baked goods or other treats and to play games together or just chat. This is a monthly event that we hope to host more frequently in the future. The Mountain Town Connector is available to transport anyone who would like a ride!



**Exercise Classes** – Bone Builders meets twice a week and on average, has over 170 monthly participants. Tai Chi for Fall Prevention meets every week and is also well attended.

**If you would like to volunteer to help with any of the programs above, please reach out at 802-824-4343.**



**Clean and Sober, a 12-step recovery program for those struggling with alcohol and/or drugs, meets at NC on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm.**



### Community Testimonials

*"I am so happy to be part of Bone Builders with Jean Jordan and such great people!*

*It has really made a huge difference. Thank you so much for all you do."*

*-Kim Ray*

*"Thank you for allowing us to use the Mountain Town Connector to go to NYC and do a Midnight Run. It was a meaningful experience for all of us as we had the opportunity to offer food, clothing, toiletry kits, and conversation to women and men living on the streets of Manhattan. The van made the experience possible."*

*-Laurie Kroos  
Londonderry  
Congregational Church*

### ***FUN FACTS about Elisa Donato, NC's Director of Outreach and Development***

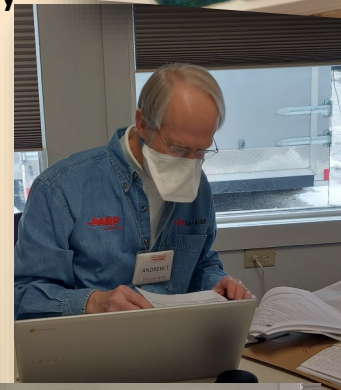
Served in Iraq with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, a National Guard unit headquartered in Troy, NY.

Learned Spanish while spending several years running a surf hotel in a beautiful seaside fishing village in Nicaragua and dreams of returning permanently one day.

Currently on a quest with her spouse to go for a run in each of the 251 towns in Vermont. With about 30 to go, this fruitless endeavor should be complete this summer!

### ***The Meeting Place Hosted Over 2,000***

In 2021, we hosted over 2,000 people in our community center –The Meeting Place. Some attended lectures or other events hosted by Neighborhood Connections, others came to socialize with their neighbors at Games & Goodies, had their taxes prepared by AARP, exercised with Bone Builders, or attended a meeting by a local community organization who booked the space.



*Clockwise: Gretchen Lima, a pedorthist from Family Footwear; a group making Bernie Mittens; Andrew Thompson, preparing tax returns for AARP; Matt Sydorowich helping folks troubleshoot their laptops.*



## The Masquerade Gala in Photos

Neighborhood Connections held its annual fundraising gala on May 20th at Weston's Walker Farm. After a hiatus of almost three years, it was wonderful to gather staff, volunteers, and community members for a fun evening of delicious food, beverages, and a live auction by the famous Eric Nathan.

A highlight of the night was a performance by Perulnca Folk, a dance troupe who performed a tribute to Dr. Delores Barbeau. Thank you to everyone who helped make the evening a smashing success!



### Upcoming Events

**September 11th**

**Mountain Town Circus at Flood Brook School**

**Date to be Determined**

**Spaghetti Dinner at Jake's**



*"Thank you so much for delivering quarantine kits full of goodies and art supplies. The girls were so surprised and it brought them so much joy in a time where they had to be isolated from school and friends. It also kept them very entertained!" -Jessica Berg*

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## School Partnership Spotlight on Flood Brook School

Through the School Partnership Program, we connect our social workers with local school families to help them access resources and services schools are not staffed to deliver. Our partnership with Flood Brook School has linked families with case management and counseling services, offered transportation to local after-school programs at the Springfield Technical Center and, through a generous grant from Ben & Jerry's, delivered 30 Covid quarantine kits filled with personal care items and toys to help keep children engaged while they recover at home from Covid.

*"As we wind down this academic year, we feel proud to know that our kids have access to this amazing agency, now and through the summer months. We are excited to partner with NC again in the coming 2022-23 school year!"*

*- Rebecca Scott, School Social Worker at FBS*

## Volunteer Spotlight

Our volunteers are the heartbeat of our organization whose daily support allows us to do what we do for the community—and we couldn't do it without them! We are so fortunate to have a large and dedicated volunteer force, and we would like to shine a spotlight on Marcia Camp—one of the greatest!

We know we can always count on Marcia to take on any task—whether that means managing the front desk, driving someone to an appointment, helping distribute weekly meals, or facilitating Games & Goodies, a monthly opportunity for folks to gather for some socialization with their friends and neighbors.

When asked what motivates her to volunteer at Neighborhood Connections, Marcia said, *"When you give, you get back. I feel so energized and joyful after volunteering here!"* Thank you Marcia, for all you do!



## How Your Donations Help the Community!

**\$50**

Provides a critical care ride to Dartmouth

Tom’s cardiologist prescribed a cardiac rehab program to help improve his health while recovering from a heart attack. Tom worried about how he would get to Dartmouth twice a week. He caught a ride on the Mountain Town Connector with Buddy—our Transportation Coordinator. His heart is getting stronger by the day!

**\$275**

Helps keep a family warm

Fran is in recovery and working hard to rebuild her life. With the high cost of childcare she can’t afford to work full time, and she fell behind on her bills. With donor support, we purchased firewood and helped pay her heating bill.

**\$500**

Assists with an unexpected home maintenance repair

Greg found himself in a predicament when his furnace went on the fritz. He lives paycheck to paycheck, making any unexpected bills difficult to cover. We were able to help Greg pay for the furnace repair and the service call to get him through the winter.



**\$1000**

Provides funds for essential car repairs

Jolene’s hours were cut at the convenience store where she worked, so when her car needed repairs, the hardship was overwhelming. Jolene felt stuck and came in to Neighborhood Connections for support. The financial leg-up provided through our grants and loans program was enough to ease her anxiety and carry her through until she could find supplementary income.

### Thank You Pati Mac For Your Generosity!

We meet the nicest people—practically on a daily basis and our encounter with Pati Mac left us full of gratitude.

Pati lives in Maine and each winter she and her husband relocate to Vermont—where he is on the ski patrol at Magic. This former kindergarten teacher/musician played a regular gig at the Upper Pass Lodge and decided to donate all her tips to our agency—and by her final performance on March 16th, the total was over \$1500! Thank you Pati! Hope to see you next year!



*Our Mission is to promote the health and well-being of the people in Southern Vermont's mountain towns through advocacy, education, and social services.*

*We proudly serve our neighbors in the towns and villages of Andover, Bondville, Chester, Jamaica, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, South Londonderry, Weston, Windham, and Winhall.*



PO Box 207 Londonderry, VT 05148

### **Eligible for Medicare This Year?**

Medicare pays for much, if not all, of the cost for covered health care services, and a Medicare Supplemental Insurance policy can help pay some of the remaining costs. Peg Lochner, an independent insurance broker is here at NC once a month to help determine the best policy for you. Call 824.4343 to make an appointment with her!

### **Thank You Town of Londonderry**

We want to thank the Town of Londonderry for awarding portion of their ARPA funds to us so that we can continue to provide valuable services to our communities. Signed into law on March 11, 2021, The American Rescue Plan Act provided \$350 billion in additional funding for state and local governments.





