

## A Working Bridges Story:

Dale\* is a single father caring for his three children while working full-time job at one of Green Mountain United Ways Working Bridges program sites.

Last winter his fuel oil tank started leaking but because he had already fallen behind in his mortgage payments, he was unable to pay for repairs on his oil tank. The leak was costing him over \$200 month in fuel and still not sufficient to heat his home – he kept his thermostat at just 55 degrees. Last winter was brutally cold and his children were always freezing, but he didn't know what to do to solve his fuel problems. He decided to meet with the Resource Coordinator. When he sat down with her, he simply stated, "I'm really trying, but I'm just so tired of my kids being cold at night".

Because of your gift to United Way, the Resource Coordinator was able to help him apply for and receive an Income Advance Loan and gave him Financial Coaching guidance to assist in getting his mortgage payments back on track, and connect Dale to local heating assistance programs. Through that help he was able to receive heating assistance which helped to repair his oil tank and now Dale has even established a savings account to pre-buy fuel.

It took your support for all three program elements, Resource Coordination, the Income Advanced Loan, and On-site Training, to help Dale get caught up on his mortgage, fix his oil tank, keep his kids warm this winter, and keep his home.

## A Tatum's Totes Story

"Socks! I haven't had socks all winter!" a young boy exclaimed to his social worker when he was handed his Tatum's Totes backpack. Last winter, a child was entering emergency foster care. He was so excited to receive a Tatum's Totes backpack when he arrived at the Department for Children and Families to get ready to meet his new foster family. These backpacks are filled with books, games, a toothbrush, comb, water bottle and school supplies. But he wasn't excited for the toys, books, water bottles, new school supplies, or the bag itself – no, he was excited about the warm, wool socks tucked into the side pouch of the backpack.

Children in our communities need our help, and because of your support for our Tatum's Totes partnership and because of the donations from caring community members just like you, each backpack can be tailored to a child's age and gender to ensure that they have something of their own to take with them throughout their time in foster care, and beyond. Your gift helps to provide a Tatum's Totes backpack giving children living right here in your county the items they need to transition into a healthy, loving foster home.

***A gift of just \$1 per pay period (\$26 per year) helps to create one fully stocked backpack for these children, and a gift of \$100 (\$4 per pay period) helps to pack 4 Tatum's Totes backpacks for children.***

## A K.E.E.P. Financial Coaching Story

**One thing we can all count on is that life does not always go as planned.** One family's life events brought them to our K.E.E.P. Financial Coach. Alice\* came to meet the United Way Financial Coach because she was close to bankruptcy due to medical bills and was not sure who to turn to or what to do next. Alice and her husband have worked all their lives and have an adult daughter with disabilities. Until her husband got cancer, they were able to take care of themselves, but now their medical bills and credit card debt were so large that they did not know what to do. Your gift helped to provide them with financial coaching services at no cost.

Thanks to you, this family is now receiving guidance to help them obtain low-cost legal services in order to prepare a living will and help them understand potential financial obligations after the death of a spouse so they can plan appropriately. Without you, they would not be able to face their future or understand the complex choices that face them. Our coaches, thanks to your support, are able to guide them through the steps they need to take to deal with their debt and their future.

***A gift of just \$1 per pay period (\$26 per year) helps a family receive one hour of Financial Coaching through our K.E.E.P. Financial Coaching Program.***

## A Community Caring Story

Recently we had the pleasure of spending a bright sunny spring-like afternoon working side-by-side with Angela\* and the other residents of the Spring View\* Apartments. Alongside Angela and our partners at the Vermont Foodbank and Rural Edge (the low-income housing agency in the Northeast Kingdom), we helped restock their struggling food shelf with much-needed healthy food. As we worked together unloading donated provisions onto the neat and tidy shelves in their small community food pantry, Angela and I watched as other residents shopped for fresh, healthy vegetables at the Veggie-Van-Go.

It was inspiring to see the progress that had been made in just 12 months. Because of your support for work in the areas of Health and Community Caring, Green Mountain United Way has been fortunate to be part of a small team working to empower Angela and other leaders among the residents learning to manage their own food shelf and improve the food security of their entire community. A well-managed food shelf will ensure the children, parents and grandparents who live there have enough to eat; kids will have full bellies and parent's stress will be lower because they have better access to healthy, nourishing food, all because of your gift and your care for your community. We could not make this happen without your pledged support.

***A gift of just \$20 per pay period (\$520 per year) gives residents the training they need to operate a community-led food shelf that includes fresh fruit and vegetables at their low-income housing site and to hold healthy food cooking demonstrations for residents.***

## A Volunteer Connection Story

Each year, as many of you know, Green Mountain United Way holds a Day of Caring volunteer day. This past year work was done at the Heaton Street facility of Washington County Mental Health and at Heaton Woods Senior Residency. Green Mountain United Way recruited and led volunteers in gardening, painting, and clean-up work around both facilities. This year's project could not have happened without your support for United Way's new Volunteer Connection and for the time donors like you so generously give to our community.

In the morning, residents of Heaton Woods came out of the building, curious to see what on earth was happening in their garden. Dedicated volunteers pulled weeds, unearthed perennials, and cleared paths to make it easier for many of these elderly or disabled residents to walk – many have walkers and the leaves, stones and branches in the paths made it difficult for residents to enjoy their outdoor area and get a bit of exercise. After the project, which some of you helped with, residents hugged volunteers and thanked them for making their garden safe and beautiful again. One resident, Jean, who is 98 and loves to sing, sang a song to all of the volunteers to show them her gratitude. In that moment, a volunteer who had been painting all day, turned to me and said, "I'm coming back this weekend to finish this. If I don't help them fix this, who will?! I had no idea I could make such a difference in my community. I'm so glad I came!"

And we're so glad that your pledges continue to help volunteers connect to the organizations they care about in our community! Incredible things happen when you give, because you also receive!

***A gift of just \$10 per pay period (\$260 per year) helps to recruit volunteers for projects like this and for non-profit's throughout the community so they can accomplish their missions.***

## A Community Caring Story

Two years ago a community got together to figure out how they could improve their town to support children ages 0-5 and help make them more kindergarten ready. The State of Vermont was willing to fund a project, but first this group of residents was required to go through a community-led process to gather input, understand the factors facing children in their community, collect ideas and present a comprehensive project plan to the State. While there was enthusiasm to make something great happen, it was hard to get everyone around the table and hard for this community group to understand where to begin. That's when they asked Green Mountain United Way to join the discussion. As a community convener, United Way could help guide the community's enthusiastic residents through a process to help gather ideas, channel enthusiasm, and gather the relevant stakeholders, as well as work with active community members to make sure that they had all of the information they needed to submit a proposal.

After community meetings and idea sessions, a vision began to take shape. This community wanted a playground, a safe space where children and their parents could go to be outdoors and spend time with other families in the community. There they could build relationships that would grow and flourish in kindergarten, children could get outside, get exercise, and have fun. The plan was put in place.

Community members stepped up. The State of Vermont and the town gave their okay and the ideas were put into action.

On the Community Building days, over 50 community volunteers came together. Tractor owners drove their tractors to the site to help spread dirt, stone and mulch. Volunteers brought rakes, shovels, and lots of homemade snacks to keep everyone's energy up. After 3 days of all-out effort, under the guidance of the community committee who had crafted the plan, and Green Mountain United Way, the playground was completed and opened on September 28<sup>th</sup> with children rushing the gates to be the first to climb, swing, and play. You can visit this new community gem in Northfield Falls near the ball fields, and see the result of the power of a community UNITED for children.

***Your gift of any amount helps Green Mountain United Way in our role as a community convener to help communities throughout our region realize their potential!***

## **A Working Bridges Story**

A young employee requested a meeting with our Resource Coordinator with a housing challenge. When and her boyfriend had a nice apartment together with a roommate, but in the last week the roommate had moved out with little notice and had left the couple with an apartment they could not afford alone. She and her boyfriend were able to find a new, more affordable apartment in the tight housing market they live in, but because their original security deposit was still tied up with the apartment they were leaving, they needed the Working Bridges loan to pay for the security deposit until they could sort things out with their landlord.

Because of your support, the Resource Coordinator was able to process their loan quickly and help them get into new, more affordable housing, and to follow-up with them to give them more financial coaching. She took the Resource Coordinator's advice and after the loan was paid back she kept the deductions going into a savings account to build up her savings for any future expenses. Thanks to you and donors like you, she was able to see her credit score and make a plan to continue to build her credit, since she was headed in the right direction after the loan was repaid.

***A gift of just \$5 per pay period (\$130 per year) helps 6 working Vermonters & their families get the help they need to face life's challenges and thrive.***

\*Indicates names have been changed to protect individual's privacy.