



Annual Report 2010/2011



"Life has no smooth road for any of us; and in the bracing atmosphere of a high aim the very roughness stimulates the climber to steadier steps, till the legend, over steep ways to the stars, fulfills itself."

~W. C. Doane

*Message from
Lisa Ventriss, Chair, Board of Trustees*



As we complete this 2010/2011 annual report, I am now approaching my second year as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Working in this volunteer leadership position with former Executive Director, Betsy Ferries, has truly been a rewarding experience and partnership. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board of Trustees with special thanks to retiring members: Donna Dalton, Steve Habif, Sr. Janice Ryan and Steve Gold; and a warm welcome to new members: John Crabbe, Tom Carlson and Mary Hurlie.

Anne Saunier has stated that: “the chair’s leadership job is to hold the lamp as high as possible so that the board can see as far as possible; and then bring it down so members can light their candle.” This lamp needs to extend far beyond the boardroom. I encourage others to hold the lamp high for our collective vision and then up close for the necessary details and labors of love. Together we can continue to bring hope, possibilities and concrete tools and resources to our neighbors.

Now in our 10th year and under the strong leadership of Executive Director, Dolly Fleming, in partnership with a talented and committed Board, Mercy Connections is prepared to face the continuing challenges caused by economic displacement and social insecurity. We are grateful to our engaged partners ~ both individual and corporate ~ who have joined us throughout the year to help women develop economic self-sufficiency.

Mercy Connections is an effective and credible organization that demonstrates a return on investment one person at a time. It is hard, human-scale work that reduces government spending and increases tax revenues; reduces recidivism and increases educational aspirations; reduces isolation and increases community. Mercy Connections is an organization worthy of your philanthropic investment. I invite you, on behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, to join us in supporting this cause.

*Message from
Betsy Ferries, former Executive Director*

For me personally, this five and a half year journey has been amazing. I have learned the fine art of administration with a gentle supportive staff. I have had a board that has, as they say, “had my back” and supported me with their varied gifts.

I have been exposed to the gift of “soul” aka, compassion. Who better to deliver that gift than the Sisters of Mercy? I confess that prior to coming on board at Mercy Connections, I had only known one nun, a feisty woman who was our neighbor on the island of Grenada.



Learning from the best, the Sisters continue to keep the mission of Mercy Connections illuminated with steady confidence in the outcomes. These selfless women actually believe in and practice the ageless values that promote the dignity and self-worth of everyone.

At Mercy Connections we speak to the factors one can control, those internal factors we believe build one’s resiliency.

By intentionally feeding our students’ ability to be resilient, the outcomes become:

- ❖ People building relationships with other low-risk individuals on the same upward journey.
- ❖ People who know when they fall down, someone is there to help them up.
- ❖ People who are given a mirror to reflect their strengths.
- ❖ People who can point to their competencies and own them.

2011 has been a very good year for us, recidivism rates much lower than the average, more quality businesses sprouting up in the county and mentor/mentee pairs deepening their roots. Thanks to all of you for believing in us.

Message from Sister Elizabeth, Sisters of Mercy



In this the 10th Anniversary Year of its founding, we, Sisters of Mercy, are rejoicing in the achievements of Mercy Connections. As a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas- Northeast Community, Mercy Connections today follows closely the tradition established by our foundress, Catherine McAuley in Ireland more than a century ago. As she saw the marginalized persons in her society ravaged by poverty and other vicissitudes of life, she realized that the best means of overcoming these ills was education and other empowering programs. In Vermont we had similar needs and Mercy Connections responded.

Presently, in addition to many competent professionals, Mercy Connections is served by a number of Sisters of Mercy who are teachers, tutors, mentors and volunteers.

Mercy Connections was launched into uncharted waters under the wise and energetic leadership of Sister Lindora Cabral. Her spirit still guides us. Then God blessed us by sending Betsy Ferris as our second Executive Director; her creative and tireless dedication guided us effectively until her life found a new direction. We will be forever grateful for her leadership and wonderful spirit. Now we have our new Executive Director, Dolly Fleming. Dolly is well known and highly respected in Vermont business and professional circles. Her enthusiasm and high expectations have us all energized. God has truly blessed us with enlightened and dedicated women leaders.

Catherine McAuley had unusual success in providing programs for the uneducated and the suffering. One secret to her success was her ability to surround herself with like-minded, highly ethical and committed lay people. Mercy Connections has followed her example. A host of lay women and men have labored long hours working with the Sisters. Without their unselfish dedication, we could not have achieved the results we have.

And, so, now on to the next ten years!

Message from our new Executive Director

“We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self sufficient. A completely self sufficient person would be sub-human.”

~Archbishop Desmond Tutu



This world can be perplexing and complex and the simple truth is that we all need one another. I applaud the vision and commitment of my predecessors, Sr. Lindora Cabral and Betty Ferries. They recognized the importance of building community, a greater sense of belonging and the power of mentoring and education.

Under their leadership, the foundation of Mercy Connections was laid and now we celebrate 10 years of success. I am honored to follow in their capable footsteps. Ultimate self sufficiency is a myth, but we have a track record of moving people towards greater self sufficiency.

I am thrilled to be advancing this organization and mission. Together, we can continue to blend and concretize social justice and compassion into meaningful outcomes for our precious community. Yes the world can be perplexing and painfully complicated. And it can be wonderful, marvelous and amazing.

Thank you for believing and investing in our mission and vision. We welcome your guidance, support and highest enthusiasm.

Education

Mercy Connections recognizes education as one of the strongest pillars of its foundation. From our founder, Catherine McAuley, to today's teachers and tutors, education has, and always will, play a key role in our success. "Taking Mercy Connections' programs and classes has assisted me in remembering and finding my inspiration," says one program participant.

80 people participated in educational programs this year, gaining confidence and skills in order to achieve their goals.

Tutoring programs offer one-on-one attention, enabling participants to work at their own pace through English Language Learning or GED/Adult Diploma programs. This model is especially effective for individuals who have not been successful in traditional learning environments. Our Book

and Writing Group and Circle programs provide skill building along with relationship-building. A natural first step for many is to take a Kindling Connections program where each woman comes to better understand *herself*, including her life story, definition of success, and strengths.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

At the completion of their programs, participants were asked to explain what changes had taken place since they first started their program. Highlights included:

- ✦ **Seven were applying or had been accepted to college**
- ✦ **97% were actively working and/or searching for meaningful work**
- ✦ **Four began working toward their GED**
- ✦ **Three are no longer homeless**

Mercy Connections piloted a nine-hour training this year to meet the *AHA! Process, Inc.*, requirements to be a facilitator of "Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' by World," workgroups.

We also offered technical assistance so that Getting Ahead (©AHA!) programs could be offered to men post-incarceration. Nine men participated in these programs, offered in collaboration with Howard Family Services, Turning Point Center, and Burlington Housing Authority.

Mentoring



The Vermont Women's Mentoring Program (VWMP) is a collaborative partnership among Mercy Connections, Vermont Works for Women and the Vermont Department of Corrections. Based on national best practices, this collaboration engages community volunteers, promotes meaningful and supportive relationships, and significantly reduces recidivism. It also improves women's lives and strengthens the community.

Women who choose to participate in VWMP report that they are more able to maintain a stable income and to face life's uncertainties in healthy, pro-active and productive ways. Having the support of another, nonjudgmental person is key to this program's success. One program participant noted, "My mentor always seems to think I can do it. . . and then I do."

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ❖ **Women participating in the VWMP program are 80% more likely to succeed in not going back to prison compared to women without mentors.**
- ❖ In 2011, out of 25 matches, 23 resulted in women successfully remaining in the community.
- ❖ Mercy Connections trained 39 new mentors from our growing pool of volunteers.
- ❖ An average of six mentors per month attended support groups to enhance their mentoring relationships in 2011.
- ❖ An average of 40 individuals (mentors and mentees) in 2011 attended each social gathering hosted by VWMP.
- ❖ Over half a million dollars was saved this year that would otherwise have been spent on incarceration (based on recidivism rates and our program population).

Wouldn't it be great to:

- ❖ Make a difference?
- ❖ Encourage someone?
- ❖ Build a relationship?

Become a mentor!

Find out more at our website,
www.mercyconnections.org

Entrepreneurship

The Women's Small Business Program (WSBP) began its 23rd year with a dynamic new team of instructors whose varied entrepreneurial experience and academic expertise led 37 women through our programs. **Jane Weintraub**, (Finance), has an MS from New School University in Organizational Change Management. She "continues to be confident that businesses, powered by the passion of their membership, can re-frame and shift practices toward a more sustainable future." **Laurel Butler**, (Business Management), spent many years as an entrepreneur and now works full-time as a Small Business Advisor through the Vermont SBDC. **Mary Johnson**, (Marketing), a former quilt shop owner, now advises small business owners through the Women's Business Center in Barre. This strong team is well suited to connect our students to a wide variety of business support resources throughout the state in addition to bringing business plan writing to life through their own experiences and unique voices.

My Little Cupcake owner, **Michelle Trudell**, is opening her second storefront in less than a year. The Essex location opened in January and her downtown Burlington location in early October. In addition to two storefronts offering over 100 flavors, Michelle also delivers daily to multiple retail locations throughout Chittenden County. My Little Cupcake is the very definition of "sweet success."



After raising 3 children and washing her own cloth diapers, Cycle 43 graduate **Cyndi Sullivan** saw a need in the parenting community for a cloth diaper delivery service. **Smarty Pants** is now delivering weekly to 25 families in the area. She has surpassed her original projections in only four months. "I am a small business owner because of two things...my third child and the Women's Small Business Program. My child inspired the purpose and the vision. WSBP required me to test and adapt my concept to create a viable and living business plan."

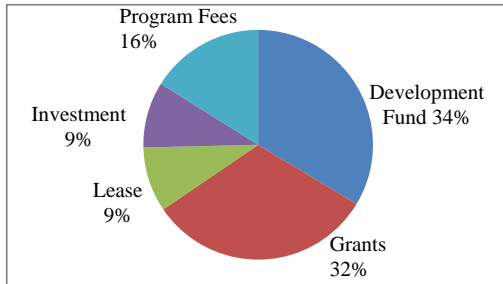
Cycle 42 graduate **Brea McBride** recently opened **Infinity Dance Studio** in Essex. Brea has been dancing all her life and spent a number of years dancing professionally and teaching. She is now the proud owner of her own studio and offers classes to all ages in a wide variety of dance forms including ballet, jazz, tap, Zumba, and a pre-professional program for students seeking careers in dance arts.



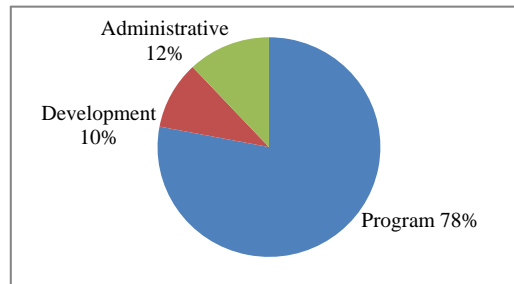
Financial Statements

July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011

Revenues: \$632,424



Expenses: \$606,335



Audited Financial Statements

Financial Notes

Mercy Connections ended the year with a **\$26,089 net operating income:**

- ✧ Development funds exceed the budget by 18%, due to the generosity of all of our supporters including the *Argosy Foundation, Amy E. Tarrant Foundation, and Mill Foundation.*
- ✧ **The annual May Luncheon netted \$38,275.** This was accomplished through the generosity of our major sponsors *Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Sisters of Mercy Northeast, and Prentiss Smith and Co.*
- ✧ Mercy Connections was awarded **eleven grants.** Our grantors include: *Vermont Department of Corrections, Howard Center, Key Foundation, Jane's Trust, Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Inc., Richard E. and Deborah L. Tarrant Foundation, Sisters of Mercy Northeast Community, Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Women's Fund, Hearst Fund and the Community and Economic Development Office.*
- ✧ **Program Fees** exceeded the budget: *Chittenden State Attorney's Office* and *Burlington Community Justice Center* helped support the Getting Ahead program while the *Vermont Department of Children and Families* helped support the Kindling Connections program. *Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)* helped support fees toward WSBP scholarships.
- ✧ **Total expenses** for Mercy Connections ended the year under budget by 4.5%. The only areas that exceeded the budget were those that supported our growing programs: food, supplies, resource material and participant incentives.

Mercy Connections is proud of its financial stewardship.

Our Donors

We are truly grateful for your support.
If we inadvertently left your name off this list, please
contact us at 846-7063. Thank you!

Individuals and Foundations

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 Jess Wilson
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 Amy Wright
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A special thanks to Beth Angolano and Donna
 Maloska for their service and spirit during their
 Mercy Connections tenure.

Save the date, and we'll save you a seat!

Leunig's Event
Sunday, February 12, 2012



Spring Luncheon
Wednesday, May 16, 2012



Organizations & Family Contributions

All Wellness
August First
Bed Bath and Beyond
CCTV
Champagne Sunset Cruise
Champlain Valley Fair
Chantilly Rose
Cheese Traders
Claussen's
Clean Spaces
Colchester Health and Fitness
Creatively Yours Cakes, Cupcakes and Cookies
Designer's Circle
Dolma Designs
Donna Thomas
Dr. Kay Schepp
Essex Cinemas
Farmhouse Tap and Grill
First Unitarian Universalist Society
Flashbags
Flynn Theater
Frames for You and Mona Lisa Too
Hazelett Strip-Casting Corporation
Patricia Heinrich
Hen of the Wood
Home Port
Honey Rose Kitchen
Joseph's House
Katharine Monstream
Kathy Rockliss
Lake Champlain Chocolates
Lake Realty
Leunigs
Lunaroma Aromatic Apothecary
My Little Cupcake
Nail Spa and Tanning
Oasis Day Spa
Ox Pasture Maples
Parlato's Production
Patrick Robins and Lisa Schamberg
Paw Print
Peter Gibbs
Peter Rowan
Print Tech
Rivulette
Robert Lyons
Sakura Bana Japanese
Seven Days
Seventh Generation
Shalom Community
Shelburne Museum
Shoeless Management
Silver by Tish
Sisters of Mercy
Sneakers
Sophie's
South End Studio
Spare Time
Spruce Peak Performing Arts
St. John's Club
Stowe Resort
Stefan Botchev Art
Texas Roadhouse

The Edge
The Essex
The Spot Diner
Vermont Stage Company
Vermont Teddy Bear
Vintage Inspired Antiques and Collectibles
VT Tent and Company
VT Toy & Hobby
West Bolton Country Club
WJOY —Hall Communications
WVMT



In Honor Of

Jo-Ann Beaudin and Paschal DeBlasio in honor of Sr. Lindora's 50th Jubilee
Barnes Boffey in honor of Sr. Lindora Cabral
John and Sandra Dooley in honor of Sr. Elizabeth's 90th Birthday
Beth Dusablon in honor of Sr. Lindora's 50th Jubilee
Cheryl Feeney in honor of Sr. Elizabeth's 90th Birthday
Sr. Susan Fortier in honor of Sr. Lindora and Sr. Lucille's 50th Jubilee
Wayne and Karen Fox in honor of Sr. Elizabeth's 90th Birthday
Kirk and Dale Gleason in honor of Sr. Lindora Cabral
Steven Gold in honor of JER and EAC
Susan Hasazi in honor of Sr. Janice Ryan and Sr. Elizabeth Candon
Sr. Jacqueline M. Kieslich and Sr. Jeannine Mercure in honor of Sr. Lindora's 50th Jubilee
Sr. Alma Levesque in honor of her parents, the Sisters of Mercy and the Levesque Family
Patricia Motch in honor of Betsy Ferries
Sherrill Musty in honor of Sr. Elizabeth
Elizabeth O'Donnell in honor of Sr. Lindora and Sr. Lucille's 50th Jubilee, and in honor of Sr. Claire and Sr. Cecile Bouchar
Martha Perkins in honor of Betsy Ferries
Linda Phillips in honor of Sr. Elizabeth's 90th Birthday
Sr. Kathleen Pritty in honor of Sr. Lindora and Sr. Lucille's 50th Jubilee
Louise Racine and Carol Boisvert in honor of Sr. Lindora's 50th Jubilee
Shalom Community in honor of Sr. Cecile and Sr. Claire's 60th Jubilee
Charles and Judy Smith in honor of Betsy Ferries
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In Memory Of

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Rev. Paul J. Carling and Cherise Rowan in memory of Mary A. Carling
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Alan and Dot Crosby in memory of Ronald Crosby and Richard Crosby
Jerry Dalton in memory of Alan Castetter
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Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Ruby in memory of Alan Castetter
Patricia Seaver in memory of Sr. Pauline Rogers
Lisa and Curt Ventris in memory of John Douglas
Lynn Vera and Pam Gale in memory of Cecilia Vera

Volunteers

Volunteers help Mercy Connections achieve its mission in numerous ways: tutoring, reading business plans, mentoring other adults, or helping to keep our office space organized and running smoothly.

Thank you to our volunteers for all that you do.

Office

Sr. Elizabeth Candon
Lorraine Colman
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