



Come As You Are To Get Where You're Going.

Mercy Connections

transforms lives. It provides education, training, support resources and reentry services for adults seeking a better life.

Adults reach their goals in an inclusive, compassionate

community; Vermont's economy is stronger because of new businesses started by Mercy Connections' graduates; people involved in the justice system successfully reenter our community; and Vermonters gain knowledge and connections that lead to healthy and fulfilling lives.

Programs & Services

- Academic Tutoring
- Community Meal Programs
- English Language Learning
- Inclusive Entrepreneurship
- Justice, Mentoring & Reentry
- Personal Growth Education
- U.S. Citizenship Preparation

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*Completed service on June 30, 2026

A Message from Our Executive Director, Lisa Falcone

Reaching the 25 year milestone for Mercy Connections fills me with gratitude for the people who have shaped this community and for the privilege of doing this work together.

For 25 years, Mercy Connections has been a place guided by a simple but powerful conviction: **that everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, belong, and shape their own meaningful future.** That conviction became a community, and that community has grown into a movement of education, empowerment, connection, and change.

Today, we are growing to meet an even greater need. Our newly expanded campus creates space for more learning, opportunity, collaboration, and community, while our growing staff brings new energy, expertise, and capacity to our work.



As we look toward the next 25 years, we are proud of how far we have come - and determined to go further. We will continue to evolve, create new pathways, and invest in the people and possibilities that shape our shared future.
The next 25 years begin now!

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa".

Lisa Falcone, *Executive Director*

THE SCENT OF SUCCESS.



“Mercy Connections helped me write my first business plan, secure my first business loan, and open Lunaroma’s first storefront.”

Leyla • Inclusive Entrepreneurship Alumna

In 2003, I was a stay-at-home mom with a toddler, a small home-based business, and a dream of building something more. I was making natural body care products in my home and selling them at craft fairs and farmers markets, but I lacked the resources, knowledge, and connections needed to grow my business.

That changed when I enrolled in Mercy Connections' Women's Small Business Program, now known as the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program. Mercy Connections helped me write my first business plan, secure my first business loan, and open Lunaroma's first storefront. Just as importantly, the program provided a supportive community of entrepreneurs, mentors, and educators who believed in my potential.

Through weekly classes, collaboration, and mentorship, I gained practical skills in business planning, marketing, accounting, and operations. More than that, I gained confidence. Mercy Connections gave me the structure, encouragement, and foundation I needed to believe that my small handmade aromatherapy business could succeed.

More than 25 years later, Lunaroma continues to grow, but I still carry the lessons I learned through that program. Mercy Connections taught me that success is built through education, community, and perseverance, and that asking for support is a strength, not a weakness.

I am deeply grateful for the role Mercy Connections played in my journey and for the opportunities it continues to create for aspiring entrepreneurs throughout Vermont.

SPEAKING OF COMMUNITY.

I came to the United States from the Republic of Congo in September 2022 after being selected through the Diversity Visa Lottery. Winning the lottery was a moment of joy in my life. I love the English language, and I wanted the chance to improve my English, build new skills, and one day use what I learn to help people in my home country.

I devoted myself to working, first and foremost, supporting myself and my family back home. I work in housekeeping at the University of Vermont Medical Center, and my English skills have helped me in my work.

In January 2025, a friend told me about Mercy Connections, and it has made a tremendous difference in my life. Through English classes, leadership development, public speaking, and business management courses, I have gained new skills and confidence.

One of the most important things I have learned is the courage to speak in public. Before coming to Mercy Connections, I did not feel comfortable speaking in front of others. Here, I found a welcoming community where I could learn, grow, and discover abilities I did not know I had.

I also enjoy attending Community Lunch each week, where I make friends and connect with people from many different backgrounds. Mercy Connections has shown me that everyone belongs and everyone is welcome.

As I recently shared at Community Lunch, “You are the light in the dark!” and Mercy Connections truly feels that way to me.

Pavel • English Language Learning Participant

**“I found
a welcoming
community where
I could learn, grow,
and discover
abilities I did not
know I had.”**



HARDWIRED FOR CONNECTION.



**“I watch participants
rediscover their
confidence, practice
self-compassion, and
remember their worth
because someone listened,
encouraged them, or
simply showed up.”**

Kelly • Vermont Women's Mentoring Program Director

This year marks my 10-year anniversary with Mercy Connections. When I started here, I was coming out of a really difficult period in my life — trying to manage an unhealthy relationship, burnout, emotional overwhelm, and honestly just trying to keep my head above water. I had a very specific concept of what success looked like and I was far from that.

Fortunately, I had people in my life who stood by me. For the first time, I truly understood how important support systems and community are—and how many people simply do not have them.

I realized that if I didn't have this support, I could easily be on the streets and incarcerated myself. But because of the support systems I grew up in and have in place, I am talking to you here today as an employee of Mercy Connections and not a mentee.

Today, I see that same power of connection in the women we serve. I watch participants rediscover their confidence, practice self-compassion, and remember their worth because someone listened, encouraged them, or simply showed up.

After ten years, I believe what Brené Brown says: we are “hardwired for connection.” Thank you for investing in connection, community, dignity, and hope. It truly changes lives.

BECAUSE OF YOU

719 PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN **93** PROGRAMS

WE HAVE **MORE THAN DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS** IN OUR PROGRAMS SINCE 2023.

840

COMMUNITY LUNCH
MEALS SERVED

971

FOOD, COATS AND BASIC
NECESSITIES DISTRIBUTED

98%

OF PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED SAID
THEY INCREASED OR DEEPENED THEIR
KNOWLEDGE OR GAINED NEW SKILLS

100%

OF PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED SAID
THEY HAD INCREASED FEELINGS OF
HOPE, CONNECTION OR BELONGING

Participants
represent
47 countries
and speak
29 different
first languages.

Program Highlights

US CITIZENSHIP PREPARATION

- 100% of participants who took the citizenship exam have passed, maintaining a **100% success rate** for more than a decade

INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **Two NEW classes offered** in collaboration with English Language Learning teachers

PERSONAL GROWTH EDUCATION

- **192 people participated** in personal growth programming at both Mercy Connections and the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility
- **98%** of participants surveyed said they **made progress towards their goals**

JUSTICE, MENTORING & REENTRY

- **335 incarcerated women+** participated in justice and mentoring programs

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

- **Offered 28 classes** at four different proficiency levels



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

VOLUNTEERS
137
People

DEDICATED
9,247
Hours

Generosity of volunteers is a critical component to Mercy Connections.

VOLUNTEERS SERVE THE COMMUNITY THROUGH

- Mentoring justice-involved women+
- Tutoring English language learning, academic support and U.S. citizenship preparation students
- Assistance at the front desk, community meals, general office support, welcoming participants, and more

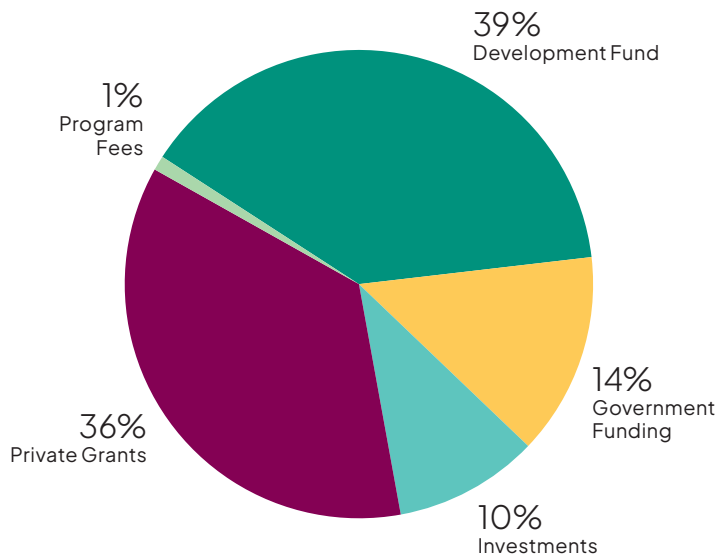
We have immense gratitude for the volunteers who make this a place where everyone can learn, grow, heal, and connect.



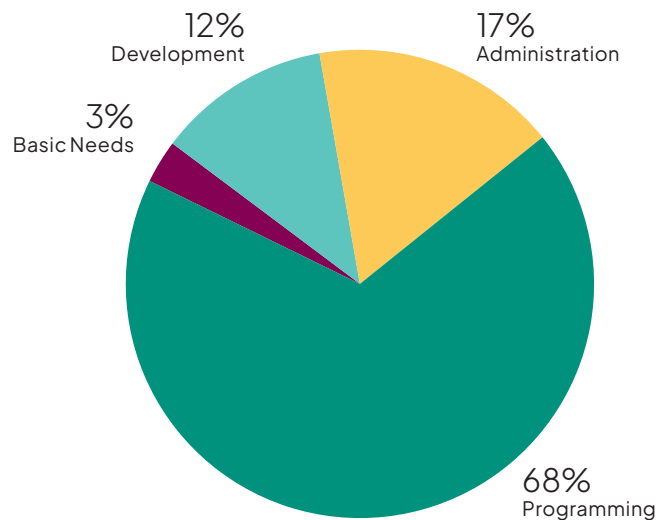
FINANCIALS

MERCY CONNECTIONS FISCAL YEAR
JULY 1, 2025–JUNE 30, 2026

REVENUE: \$1,590,533



EXPENSES: \$1,540,517



These are unaudited numbers.

POWER OF CONNECTION

“Leonard Cohen wrote that there is a crack in everything — that’s how the light gets in. I think about Mercy Connections that way. This organization finds the cracks — the places where people have been broken or forgotten or overlooked — and it lets the light in.

I am so grateful to have been part of this work, even in a small way. Thank you for this honor. Thank you for 25 years. And please — keep going.”

Erik Hoekstra,
Managing Partner at Redstone,
2026 Catherine McAuley Community Award Recipient



SINCERE GRATITUDE

When you support Mercy Connections, you help make positive change in Vermont. With more than 85% of Mercy Connections funding coming from private support, **we truly could not do this without you.**



YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Mercy Connections would not exist without the generous and dedicated support of individuals, corporations and foundations. These gifts (received between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026) make the life-changing work of Mercy Connections possible.

Leading Supporters: Individuals and Foundations

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Reach out to info@mercyconnections.org

Become an Event Sponsor

Call 802-846-7083 or send an email to eevarts@mercyconnections.org



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