



*mercy*  
connections

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT



EDUCATION · MENTORING · ENTREPRENEURSHIP · COMMUNITY

# *A letter from our* EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

**During these complex times, Mercy Connections is a place of hope, compassion, opportunity, and progress for adults in our beloved Vermont community.** Through our innovative and impactful education and social justice programs, people are empowered to make significant life changes, and they absolutely do!

This report is a celebration and reflection of the eighteenth year at Mercy Connections. We honor the hard work and personal commitment of our courageous participants, dedicated volunteers, and generous supporters. We highlight Mercy Connections' contributions to addressing current social issues affecting our community—including mental health and substance use disorders, incarceration and recidivism, and financial and economic instability.

As executive director, I am immensely proud and thankful for our collective work and all of you—the Mercy Connections community. Together, we make a difference for so many who are seeking connection and a better way of life.

**We truly could not do this transformative work without you.**

With deep gratitude,



Lisa Falcone

*Executive Director*



# Education & Transition



*“At Mercy Connections, I found that the tutors and students are all very respectful and friendly. I did some goal setting and I started meeting with Gail, my tutor, every week. Because of this, I passed my CCV math class. At Mercy Connections, I fit in. I feel welcomed, my confidence has improved, and best of all, I feel that I matter!”*

— Isnino

2019 May Luncheon E&T Speaker

## The Education and Transition Programs (E&T)

provide adults with skills, confidence, and community needed to pursue their goals and make significant life changes. Through a diverse selection of adult education classes, personalized tutoring, and facilitated support groups, our participants learn to create meaningful plans and a path forward within a community of encouragement and guidance.

Examples of our classes include: Developing Self; Vermont Community Leadership Training; American Citizenship Preparation; Computer Tutorials; and Pen & Pages, a book group and writing workshop.

In addition, our Thursday Community Lunch is a weekly highlight for all—bringing participants, staff, volunteers, and guests together to connect over a home-cooked, nutritious meal and lively conversation.



## E&T Results:

148



Total unique E&T participants served

4788



Total number of participant classroom hours

1745



Total number of meals served through our weekly community lunch

100%



Participants who reported feeling a strong sense of support and community

# Justice & Mentoring

*“I was introduced to Mercy Connections while I was incarcerated at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. At this point in my life, I’m working 40-50 hours a week, while meeting all house requirements at Northern Lights. Without this program and the support it gives us women, I truly believe I would not have the success I have today.”*

— Amber  
2019 May Luncheon J&M Speaker



**The Vermont Justice & Mentoring Program (J&M)** is widely recognized for its life-changing mentoring program, matching trained volunteers with women who are incarcerated or in diversion programs. Mentors support them in prison, on release, and as they re-integrate into community life.

We have grown to over 75 mentor and mentee matches and also offer programming in the women’s correctional facility and at Northern Lights, a transitional residence for women newly released from prison.

Our evidence-based strategies reduce risk behaviors, leading to lower recidivism and progress for women re-entering the community. We also actively collaborate with local, regional, and statewide partners with the shared goal of supporting women involved in the criminal justice system.

## J&M Results:

75



Average number of active mentoring pairs

34



Number of newly trained mentors

25%



Percentage of new mentees participating through prison diversion programs

0%



Number of matched mentees returned to prison for a new crime

# Women's Small Business Program



*"I want to express my gratitude for Mercy Connections' programs. They have enlightened me to my own capacity and power, and to prioritize my values in my career and personal pursuits. I feel like I received a gift – the gift of an excuse to do something for myself – to make my dreams a reality, to explore and define achievable goals, and the confidence to fulfill them."*

— Stephanie  
2019 May Luncheon WSBP Speaker

## The Women's Small Business Program (WSBP)

is a trailblazer and leader in preparing women entrepreneurs to gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to launch and operate their own businesses.

The WSBP is anchored by our trademark comprehensive business planning course, Start Up. We also offer expert-led topical workshops, opportunities to meet with entrepreneurial leaders, new group coaching and co-working sessions, and peer support for aspiring and new business owners.

The WSBP has been fueling the Vermont economy since 1989 with the creation of hundreds of women-owned businesses over the years.



## WSBP Results:

154



Total number of WSBP students

14



Number of woman-owned businesses launched or expanded this past year

15



Group coaching and co-working sessions hosted

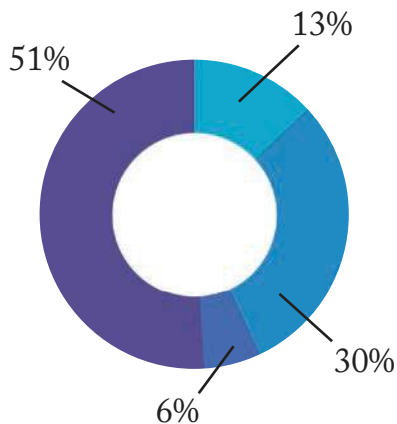
100%



Students who gained new skills to start or enhance their business

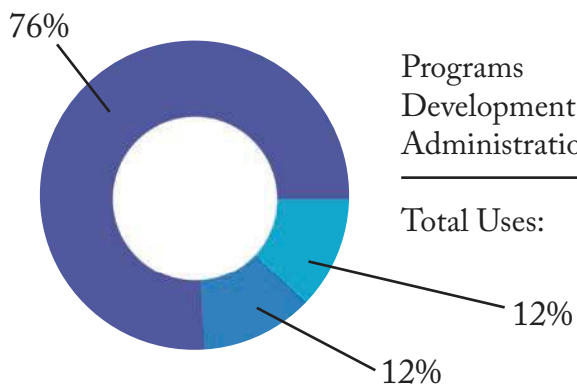
# Financials

## SOURCES



Development Fund	\$469,987	51%
Investments	\$118,322	13%
Grants & Contracts	\$277,000	30%
Program Fees	\$60,452	6%
<b>Total Sources:</b>	<b>\$925,761</b>	

## USES



Programs	\$707,149	76%
Development	\$111,649	12%
Administration	\$107,119	12%
<b>Total Uses:</b>	<b>\$925,917</b>	

## Our volunteers make a difference.



*Celebrating Joan and her 11 years of service.*

Joan is one of over 200 incredible volunteers who serve Mercy Connections as tutors, mentors, community lunch cooks, office support, trustees, and more. Most volunteers dedicate weekly hours to help participants reach their goals. The value of our volunteers' work is priceless.

## How You Can Help

With more than 85% of our revenue directly from private funding, our work at Mercy Connections wouldn't be possible without the dedicated support of individual, corporate, and major donors in our community.

Please help us sustain this life-changing work by making a gift today.

- Monthly & Annual Donations
- In-Kind Donations
- Honorary & Memorial Gifts
- Event Sponsorships
- Stock Transfers
- Planned Giving

To discuss your giving, please contact Marissa Strayer-Benton at: [mstrayerbenton@mercyconnections.org](mailto:mstrayerbenton@mercyconnections.org)

*You can view the complete list of our volunteers and donors at [mercyconnections.org](http://mercyconnections.org)*



*“Everyone is worthy at Mercy Connections. Everyone has potential with dreams to be embraced and followed. When you’re there, what comes into clear focus is what matters most in life: relationships and*

*connections. It is not an overstatement to say that Mercy Connections transforms lives.”*

— Theresa Alberghini DiPalma  
2019 Catherine McAuley Award Recipient

## Jazz Jam and May Luncheon Sponsors

### Elizabeth Candon Level

The University of Vermont Health Network

### Leadership Level

Comcast  
Farrell Distributing Corporation  
Farrell Properties  
Green Mountain Power  
National Life Group  
Paul Frank + Collins P.C.  
The University of Vermont  
The University of Vermont Health  
Network Medical Group

### Empowerment Level

A.N. Deringer, Inc.  
Comcast  
Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC  
The Fountain Fund  
Hickok & Boardman Insurance Group  
JP Morgan  
KeyBank  
Mascoma Bank  
NorthCountry Federal Credit Union  
Northfield Savings Bank  
PC Construction Company  
TD Bank  
VELCO

### Community Level

The Alchemist  
Bergeron, Paradis & Fitzpatrick, LLP

### Community Level (cont.)

BioTek Instruments, Inc.  
Donna Burke  
The Carmolli Family  
Champlain College  
The Coates Family  
Tristram Coffin & Family  
Community Bank, N.A.  
Dedalus Wine Shop, Market, & Wine Bar  
Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC  
Esmond Communications  
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Hickok & Boardman Network of Companies  
Virginia L. Hood & Leslie McCrorey Wells  
Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of  
Commerce & GBIC  
Leonardo's Pizza  
Pam Mackenzie  
MMR, LLC  
Northeast Delta Dental  
Point Bay Marina  
Pomerleau Family Foundation  
ReArch Company, Inc.  
Redstone Commercial Group  
Saint Michael's College  
Silverlake Wealth Management, LLC  
Sisters of Mercy Northeast Community  
Society of Saint Edmund  
Harlan & Joan Sylvester  
Thornton Investment Management, PLLC  
VT Association of Hospitals and Health  
Systems  
Vermont Business Roundtable  
Vermont Gas Systems, Inc.

## Major Gifts & Grants:

Reverend Mary & John Abele  
Theresa Alberghini DiPalma &  
Robert DiPalma  
Anonymous (6)  
Argosy Foundation  
Ben & Jerry's Foundation  
Bergeron Family Foundation  
Scott & Carol Boardman  
City of Burlington - CEDO  
Maureen R. Cooper  
The Fountain Fund  
The Ewing Marion Kauffman  
Foundation  
KeyBank Foundation  
The Mill Foundation  
National Life Group Foundation  
Northeast Mercy Ministry Fund  
People's United Community  
Foundation  
Katherine Schubart  
Elizabeth Steele  
Marianne Stephan  
TD Charitable Foundation

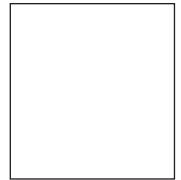


*“Mercy Connections has a fierce commitment to social justice, anti-racism, and supporting the journey of women striving to make their lives better. Little did I know that committing my energy here would make my life so much better.”*

— Leslie McCrorey Wells  
Jazz Jam Committee Co-Chair



255 South Champlain Street, #8  
Burlington, VT 05401



# Building an inclusive community for All



## Mercy Connections Board of Trustees

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Scott Boardman         | Amit Lodha             |
| Matt Daly, Vice Chair  | Subha Luck             |
| Erica Dean*            | Bobbe Maynes           |
| Arline Duffy           | Leslie McCrorey Wells* |
| Dawn Ellinwood, Chair  | Larry Michaels         |
| Yael Friedman          | Jenny Naylor           |
| Sarah George           | Rowshan Nemazee        |
| Joy Hastings           | Ray Rouleau            |
| Erik Hoekstra          | Louisa Schibli         |
| Lacretia Johnson Flash | Heidi St. Peter        |
| Rosa Laboy-Hernandez   | Heidi Stumpff*         |
| Kathy LaCross          | Mary Sullivan          |
| Michell Langlais       | Leandre Waldo          |

*\*Recently retired board members*

## Mercy Connections Staff

- |                 |               |                        |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Cathy Ainsworth | Melissa Lang  | Alana Shaw             |
| Janet Dooley    | Anne Lezak    | Marissa Strayer-Benton |
| Lisa Falcone    | Kelly Moran   | Claire Wheeler         |
| Marian Fritz    | Joanne Nelson | Kirsten Wilson         |
| Heather Gilbert | Ashley Sandy  | Lisa Wood              |

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
OUR PROGRAMS VISIT:  
[MERCYCONNECTIONS.ORG](http://MERCYCONNECTIONS.ORG)

