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

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

“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
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
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

“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
Financials

**SOURCES**

![Pie chart showing sources of funding]

- Development Fund: $469,987 (51%)
- Investments: $118,322 (13%)
- Grants & Contracts: $277,000 (30%)
- Program Fees: $60,452 (6%)

Total Sources: $925,761

**USES**

![Pie chart showing uses of funding]

- Programs: $707,149 (76%)
- Development: $111,649 (12%)
- Administration: $107,119 (12%)

Total Uses: $925,917

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**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

You can view the complete list of our volunteers and donors at mercyconnections.org

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**Our volunteers make a difference.**

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.

*Celebrating Joan and her 11 years of service.*
We are all connected...

“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

Major Gifts & Grants:

Reverend Mary & John Abele
Theresa Alberghini DiPalma & Robert DiPalma
Anonymous (6)
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Ben & Jerry’s Foundation
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National Life Group Foundation
Northeast Mercy Ministry Fund
People’s United Community Foundation
Katherine Schubart
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“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

Jazz Jam and May Luncheon Sponsors

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Connection
2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT
Building an inclusive community for All

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