Champlain Community Services provides essential supports to people with intellectual disabilities and autism, building a community where everyone participates and belongs.

CCS is a Specialized Service Agency (SSA) within the State of Vermont’s Developmental Services System.

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit
FEIN 03-6015899
Established 1967
Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors
The past year served as a testament to our collective strength and determination in the face of unprecedented challenges. In the spirit of resilience, CCS navigated unforeseen obstacles, adapting and evolving to meet the needs of our community. This commitment to adaptability and fortitude enabled us to weather the storm, and positioned us for sustained growth and impact in the years to come.

A highlight of this year has been our collaboration with our sister agency, Green Mountain Support Services (GMSS). In times of hardship, the true strength of our SSA community was revealed through the support and solidarity of its members and the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living. Together, our multi-agency partnership faced challenges head-on, pooling resources and expertise as we extended helping hands.

Moving forward, I am confident that the lessons learned during the past year will serve as a solid foundation for our future endeavors.

In a world where change is a constant, the continuity and stability that our employees bring to CCS is truly invaluable. They are the bedrock upon which our resolve and “secret sauce” is built. I extend my sincere gratitude to our staff, and to the Board, volunteers, and supporters who have contributed to our success and during these challenging times.

On behalf of the Board, thank you all for your steadfast and unwavering commitment to CCS. Through our collective efforts we make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. We look forward to the opportunities that the coming year will bring, and to furthering our mission. Together.

Zoltan Sachs
President
From the Executive Director

As Executive Director, I’m often confronted with trying to be in two places at once – both places I really want to be: **here at our offices**, supporting our work and our people, **and outside the agency**, working with partners to try to keep the system on track.

Here at CCS headquarters, we’re celebrating our **FIFTH year as one of Vermont’s Best Places to Work**. That’s no small task given our lingering workforce issues, but we’ve made great progress. A year ago CCS faced nearly **twenty-five open positions**. As I write this today we have **nine**. That required a lot of advocacy – many of you helped – and a monumental amount of work to recruit, train, onboard and welcome each new person. We are so happy for the people who have joined us, and we also celebrate that nearly half of our workforce has been with us five years or longer. While investing in human resources we also began a list of important infrastructure upgrades to our historic building at Ft. Ethan Allen.

I am also very proud of our contributions to the broader system of care. In spring of 2023 CCS was asked to support our “sibling” agency, Green Mountain Support Services (GMSS) to get back on its feet. Within six months of work with our remarkable senior team, GMSS regained State designation, settled concerns with the Department of Labor, restored much confidence, and adopted policies and programs that will help it effectively support people in the community.

Additionally, our Way2Work education and employment team of superstars offered to take on a new post-secondary educational initiative called Peer Grown and Lifelong Learning. CCS agreed to be the anchor agency for two other agencies, hiring the staff, developing workbooks, and working on a syllabus that works in seven different sites in the northern part of our state. It’s a tall ask – and one I’ve seen CCS embrace time and time again. When asked to step up, we try very hard to say, “Yes!”

There is much work on the horizon: the statewide system is changing – we’ll be making sense of EVV (electronic visit verification), COI (conflict of interest-free case management) and new assessments SIS (Supports Intensity Survey) in the coming two years. We are also working to define our rates and advocating for good wages for our staff. Here at the office we’re busy training new staff, going back to near-normal service delivery, and soon we’ll be revisiting our mission, vision and strategic plan.

It’s exciting to think about the future of CCS and of the services in our state.

Elizabeth Sightler
Executive Director
Board of Directors

Zoltan Sachs
President

Peggy Day
Vice-President

Carter Bradshaw
Secretary

Bethany J. Dubuque
Treasurer

Peter McDougall
(Past President)

Jackson DeLilli

Hasan Ko

Sarah E. DeBouter
Senior Management Team

Beth Sightler
Executive Director
18 years

Brent Hewey
Associate Director
25 years

Karen Ciechanowicz
Director of Operations
20 years

Michelle Paya
Director of Education & Employment Services
16 years

Mike Reilly
Development Coordinator
16 years
Meet Brent
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Brent Hewey has been a vital part of CCS for more than a quarter century.

“I started October first of 1998,” he remembers, “as a Community Inclusion Facilitator (a role now known as DSP).” He later served as a Service Coordinator, and advanced through several managerial roles and titles to now serve as Associate Director. Brent has witnessed, and contributed to, CCS’ continued evolution, growth, and development.

“Then, we were still known as CVS – Champlain Vocational Services – and were in the process of closing the sheltered workshop,” Brent said. “Getting folks really integrated into the community, whether for community or employment supports. The workshop was still in full swing, but you’d see folks’ paychecks and it was pennies. It wasn’t gainful employment.”

“I think this was really when CCS’ specialized focus towards employment really took off,” Brent said, “and I was hired to support the work of transitioning away from the sheltered workshop and toward supporting people to find gainful employment.” Of course, through its Way2Work program, CCS has gone on to receive national and international recognition for that approach.

While CCS direct supports remain highly personalized, Brent sees (and has overseen) much change in how organizations such as CCS communicate, manage, and evaluate their work. “Computers, email, were newish to human services in 1998,” he said, “and actually using them even newer.” That changed rapidly over time, and handwritten processes gave way to electronic tools and
increasingly complex systems from integrated phone and email systems, in-house to ultimately cloud-based data servers, adoption of Electronic Health Records, and so much more. Brent was on point for CCS for all of these and often “the answer to all questions” as the rest of the team learned.

“I have a love-hate relationship with it all,” he says of the changes. “There are efficiencies and benefits, but something can get lost in the translation if you spend too much time and emphasis on counting the beans,” he said, noting it can mean the difference between “having – or missing – a nice little face-to-face conversation to see how someone is really doing.”

“I think what is beautiful, though I personally don’t always get the opportunity, is working with our folks one-on-one,” Brent said. “But it’s still beautiful to see the relationships our direct support staff, and our case managers, forge with our clients – and that hasn’t changed.”

That’s why he feels at home after 25–plus years. He even lives on the Ft. Ethan Allen campus ("I love my work commute," he joked). “What keeps me here, frankly, is that it’s good work and I get to work with great people. You can’t underestimate that.”
Champlain Community Services (CCS) is a developmental services and health care provider with a mission “to provide essential supports to people with intellectual disabilities and autism, building a community where everyone participates and belongs.” We offer a broad array of services – at work, at home, for school, and in the community – with a highly individualized and personal approach. A Specialized Services Agency (SSA) within the State of Vermont’s developmental services system of care, our focus is on employment, education and career development supports.

**IN FY2023 WE SERVED 125 CONSUMERS AGENCYWIDE, INCLUDING:**

### Home Supports

CCS provided housing through contracted Home Providers to **30 individuals in Developmental Services** and eight (8) through Homeward our Adult Family Care (AFC) program. Homeward provides long-term home supports, in a family setting in the community, to individuals who are eligible for the “Choices for Care” waiver.

### Community Supports

Throughout the year, our Direct Support Professionals provided one-to-one supports to help those we serve in pursuit of their individual goals. This includes basic needs from shopping, banking, medical and educational appointments, to more personal goals, from exercise and fitness to cultural and recreational activities.

**Vital community partners include:**
- ECHO Lake Aquarium
- Shelburne Farms
- Shelburne Museum
- Vermont Parks Forever
School2Work offers career skills development and job placement that prepares high school students with disabilities for successful transitions to the competitive workplace. It is home to our Youth Employment initiative through Vermont’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

School2Work, in collaboration with HireAbility and area high schools, offered Youth Employment supports to students with disabilities in exploring, gaining and maintaining employment prior to transition from high school. We support exploring industries and careers beyond those typically slotted for workers with disabilities.

SCHOOL2WORK YOUTH EMPLOYMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- 20 students at five school districts in two counties in FY23
- 15 students obtained and maintained successful employment, (including four (4) that participated in multiple positions)
- 12 job placements made
- 17 work internships completed
- 10 students graduated from high school with employment
- 50 worksite tours and informational interviews completed
- 2870 hours of support provided to students

5 schools participated:
Mount Mansfield Union High School, Burlington High School, Bellows Free Academy (St. Albans), South Burlington High School, Milton High School

In its eighth year under CCS administration Bridging offers current high school students an academic-year of three days per week featuring experiential educational opportunities focused on:

- Community engagement
- Career exploration
- Independent living
- Advocacy

Our innovative peer mentor initiative enhanced student learning while bringing valuable community assets to the program.

Eleven (11) students, representing four area high schools (Burlington, Colchester, Mt. Mansfield Union, and South Burlington), completed the Bridging last year, and one has returned as a peer mentor this year.
Way2Work provides a unique employment and education continuum for Vermont youth and adults with intellectual disabilities. Adult Employment is the flagship program of Way2Work and continues to be a recognized leader and sought-after consultant in the field of employment for people with disabilities.

ADULT EMPLOYMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- 83% of Way2Work Participants are employed in the competitive workforce.
- 71% of those served by CCS are employed
- 13 new job placements
- All participants at or above minimum wage
- Hours worked range from 1 hour to 35 hours – 8.75 hours is the average
- Total wages earned $293,955
- Total Social Security Savings $139,095

Raising the Bar

“CCS education and employment programs continue to expand, strengthen, and diversify Vermont’s work force. As employment supports for workers with disabilities continue to evolve, the time is now to raise the bar of expectations. We encourage those workers to reach for careers that utilize their skills and fulfill their dreams, and we challenge all industries across Vermont to offer opportunities for all workers. CCS will work with you -- to strengthen our workforce, economy, and communities. Together.”

~ Michelle Paya, Director of Education and Employment
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Meet Dino
A SCHOOL2WORK SUCCESS STORY

Dino works for Vermont Flight Academy (VFA), a job he started in March 2023 after a tour and exploratory internship there. Dino currently cleans the planes, mostly Cessnas, but has also been training in plane maintenance. “I feel like I am a very good fit at VFA,” Dino said. “There are mechanics in the hangar, and I job shadow them. I help them out when they are in deep trouble, and when things are broken and need to be fixed. They tell me exactly what my role is and what needs to be done with an aircraft.”

“I feel like I am a very good fit at VFA.”

Dino is also taking a plane maintenance course, and eventually will be involved in pilot training and practice. “I’m still a young adult, so I’m not sure what I’ll be doing after VFA,” he said. “One thing I will say though is that I am trying to get more maintenance experience and gain skills in flying. After that, I want to work as a commercial pilot for Delta Airlines.”

School2Work Youth Employment Specialist Liz Underwood met with Dino when he was still a student at Burlington High School, and looked for ways to target Dino’s personal career interests. “I’ve had a passion for aviation since I was a kid in elementary school,” Dino said. “I grew up in the Balkans – Bosnia – so I flew often between there and America. I used to be scared of airplanes. When flying at night it looked like a space ship and I was afraid we would crash. Then I shifted my focus to the aircrafts themselves, and I have since studied aircrafts and designs.”

At VFA, there is a flight simulator Dino has used, and he also gone airborne for three “Discovery Flights,” including one to Plattsburgh piloted by a maintenance colleague. While getting the feel for flying, Dino said, “I have to listen to the flight instructor. There is a lot to pay attention to – we don’t want it to feel like a roller coaster!” We’re confident Dino will pilot a smooth, steady climb.

“I am so incredibly thankful to Matt and the folks at VFA for providing this opportunity to Dino. It is wonderful to see what can happen when our folks are able to pursue their talents and passions in a fun and supportive environment. Dino and his family have been such joys to work with, and these outcomes make me so proud of the work my colleagues and I do every day.”

~ Liz Underwood, Youth Employment Specialist
‘The most powerful experiences in my life have been the ones that bring tears to my eyes; always involving making a connection with someone,’ said Carter Bradshaw, a Board member at CCS since 2018 and, current Secretary. She was reflecting on the impact of getting to know a young man with intellectual disabilities while serving as a Best Buddies volunteer.

‘I recognized his desire simply for connection with others, and felt frustrated at the lack of voice, and understanding, and the exclusion he faced in his life. By understanding the way he saw the world, my own perspectives shifted to broaden my interpretation of our society in many ways.’

Carter learned of CCS while serving as a mentor in the ThinkCollege program at UVM. She said her interest in being a mentor stemmed from both her experiences with Best Buddies and from growing up closely with a cousin with developmental disabilities. It also helped lead her to a summer internship at CCS with Development Coordinator Mike Reilly. She had an opportunity to conduct interviews for the Annual Report.

‘Centering myself in the community and learning more about CCS – deep connections and hearing people’s personal stories about CCS really lit me up and made me feel so close to the people I was working with. I realized I wanted to always be in conversation with people.’
In addition to her role as Secretary, Carter chairs the Board’s Strategic Planning Committee, and guided development of the current strategic plan. She said her deep belief in CCS’ mission and its impact in the community, as well as a personal commitment to building equitable communities, make it a good fit. “CCS has been such a wonderful family to be a part of!”

Looking forward to completing her master’s degree in social work this May, Carter said, “I’ve realized that all of this work with CCS led to me wanting to be in the social work field, and will serve me well in a career centered around working with children and families to support their mental health and wellbeing. I really think of CCS as a jumping off point for where I want to go and the impact I want to have on people and in the world - and a continual family to me always.”
Meet Emily
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

My name is Emily Posner and I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at CCS. Would you believe me if I said my first day at CCS was the first day Vermont went into lockdown due to Covid 19 in 2020? Believe it; and I have not thought twice about it since the day I said, “Yes.”

“For me, the special thing about being a part of CCS is waking up knowing I am going to make a difference.”

Was it easy learning the ropes online and over Zoom? Not particularly, as I am a hands-on learner. But my team welcomed me and made me feel like, “Okay, we’re in this together.” Because we were! There was no right or wrong way to go about this – it was a learning curve for everyone. That’s when I knew if I can work through this, I could work through anything.

CCS paid me right off the bat and made sure there was something for me to learn until it was time for me to be on my own. Not only do I get to help and encourage some amazing human beings, I get to learn something new every single day, and that makes me excited for the future.

Recently I ran into an old buddy of mine from grade school who happens to be a long-time graduate from the Bridging program here at CCS. He’d returned to CCS that day to speak to the current students of the program. Boy did that day bring me full circle. This gentleman inspired me to grow and respect everyone around me at just the age of eight, and he became a great friend. Seeing him that day reassured me, and made me realize I was in the right place in my life.
SUSTAINABILITY

FY23 featured significant investment in infrastructure, specifically toward capital improvements and staffing.

Headquarters

The ebb-and-flow of foot and vehicle traffic were sometimes impacted, but with guidance from Safety Officer Randy Henson we got through it as we began some much needed repairs and improvements to our historic building at Ft. Ethan Allen, some directly improving access for all. Not all completed in FY23, but partial list includes:

- Rebuilt the “sun room” with new energy-efficient windows
- Rebuilt main entrance with wider accessible door
- Concrete leveling at main entrance
- New Way2Work doors
- New ramp and handrails
- Some repointing of exterior brick work
- Paving of parking lot

Staff Recruitment

A workforce shortage that began prior to, but was exaggerated by, the COVID pandemic challenged our ability to provide the levels of service to which we are committed. The past year reflected an intense commitment by CCS, led by Director of Operations Karen Ciechanowicz, to recruit and retain staff.

Unprecedented investment in traditional print and digital ads, supplemented by staffing job fairs, new investments in radio spots, as well as TV and streaming video spots helped us get a handle on vacancies. Others joined the effort, with direct service and management staff and a number of consumers participating in video shoots and radio voice overs (the velvet tones of Service Coordinator Lane Gibson made “Hi, I’m Lane” a catch phrase.)
CCS partnered with the Robert Larner College of Medicine at UVM Medical Center on a research project as part of the College’s Public Health Project (PHP) during the Spring semester of 2023.

Seven first-year medical students and a Faculty Mentor worked with CCS on a semester-long study that examined the “Impact of Staffing Levels of Developmental Services on Community Health.” Our team deeply engaged with a literature review, data collection, and both individual interviews and focus groups with CCS staff, consumers, and representatives of Vermont Care Partners colleague agencies.

The team discovered unprecedented staff shortages at CCS (and throughout our field) but also cited a strong level of job satisfaction and commitment to the work on behalf of current employees. Noting that chronic underfunding of developmental services agencies has public health consequences, they maintained, “A high turnover rate can put a large financial burden on these organizations and have a negative impact on the quality of life of the IDD population.”

Participating students were Tucker Angier, Haley Bayne, Julia Bernier, Jacquelyn Ferguson, Sarah Krumholz, Emmanuel Ogunlana, and Meron Yishak, all members of the College of medicine’s Class of 2026. Dr. Stephen Everse served as Faculty Mentor and CCS Develop Coordinator Mike Reilly was Community Mentor.

This was CCS’ fifth such partnership with the PHP initiative.
“Through this experience I was able to see first-hand the incredible dedication and passion CSS staff have for their consumers. It was undeniably clear this organization takes great pride in providing the best support for the families and consumers who use their services.”

~ Sarah Krumholz, first-year medical student and CCS volunteer

“During the project, the staff at CCS was extremely helpful in answering questions and allowed us incredible access. They are providing an outstanding service to the community, and this was evident from the first day that we started working with them.”

~ Tucker Angier, first-year medical student and CCS volunteer

“Life has changed since I started with CCS. It is just having the assurance of help when I need it.”

~ CCS consumer and focus group participant
CCS held Awards Lunch ‘23 at the beautiful Elley-Long Music Center at Fort Ethan Allen in April, giving it the feel of a homecoming.

**Emiliano Void**, Founder and CEO of **nuwave Equity Corporation** in Burlington and winner of VBSR’s Young Changemaker Award in 2022 delivered an inspiring Keynote, concluding:

“You are all changing this place we call home, whether it is because of your work, your financial contributions, your advocacy, or just by shining your light and being who you are . . .

People who believe that the only difference between radical change, and actual change, is the desire to make it happen. People who get up every day and contribute to making radical change a reality. People like you all here today. By making this place make more sense with and for folks that have intellectual disabilities and autism, you also make it make more sense for people like me. I see you, I look up to you, and hope to be more like you. Thank you.”

~ Emiliano Void
Community Impact Award Winners

**DOTTIE FULLEM AWARD FOR ADVOCACY:**
Whitley Draper

**PAULINE O’BRIEN AWARD FOR ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS:**
Emily Kittredge and John Clark

**JOYCE LAWRENCE AWARD FOR BELONGING:**
Kristi Kenney and Elizabeth Trostel, August First

**THERESA VILLEMAIRE AWARD FOR PARTICIPATING:**
Liz Underwood

Whitley Draper earned the 2023 Dottie Fullem Award for Advocacy. In presenting the award, Champlain Voices President Hasan Ko said, in part,

“I will tell you all a little bit about what members of our group said about her. She has a quiet but powerful voice. She takes time to think about what she wants to say. She comes up with her own ideas. For example, she helps us think about how we can meet new people and start new relationships, even when we have a full life living with our families. She is not afraid to bring up ideas that can be hard to talk about. People think of her as a wise person and they stop and listen to what she has to say. She helps us in our group, and is slowly coming out of her shell for the self-advocacy movement.”

Thank You Awards Lunch Sponsors

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## Balance Sheet

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<th>6/30/2023</th>
<th>6/30/2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
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<td>Accounts Receivable</td>
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<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
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<td>Property &amp; Equipment</td>
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<td>Accumulated Depreciation</td>
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<td>(1,077,885)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$2,877,876</strong></td>
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<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<td><strong>Total Current Liabilities</strong></td>
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<td>Long-Term Obligations, less current</td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$2,215,338</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$2,877,876</strong></td>
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<td>Days cash on hand</td>
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<td>Days Revenue in Receivables</td>
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<td>Current Ratio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-Term Debt to Equity</td>
<td>.096%</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
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Revenue

Medicaid Waiver ............................................................................................................................................................ $7,404,275
CFC .......................................................................................................................................................................................... $510,488
COVID Relief ..................................................................................................................................................................... $219,673
Other Contracts ............................................................................................................................................................. $162,895
Grants .................................................................................................................................................................................... $221,209
Fundraising ........................................................................................................................................................................ $35,366
United Way ........................................................................................................................................................................ $30,630
Miscellaneous ................................................................. $15,844

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE ................................................................................................................................. $8,600,377

NOTE: The financial statement above represents the agency's unaudited internal financial statement intended solely for the use of management of the agency and should not be used for any other purpose.
**FINANCIALS**

**Expenses**

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SUPPORT &amp; REVENUE</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,338,061</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The financial statement above represents the agency’s unaudited internal financial statement intended solely for the use of management of the agency and should not be used for any other purpose.
BEST PLACES TO WORK

CCS earned a spot on the list of “Best Places to Work in Vermont” for a 5th consecutive year. And we’re committed to keeping that streak going. During FY23, in addition to our vigorous and sustained recruitment efforts . . .

CCS Invested in Staff

- Raised starting wage for front-line staff
- CCS covered cost of health insurance increase for staff
- Raised on-call and back-up stipends
- Six-month “sign-on bonus” for most positions
- CTO Bank for staff
- Micro-loan program for staff

and Staff Development

- Six (6) staff attended National Conference on Mental Health in Los Angeles, CA
- Two (2) attended National APSE Conference in Columbus, OH
- Two successful all-staff training/retreat events
- Partnered with NCSS to provide RISK training for management staff
- Offered Relias training platform for professional development
- Special trainings (including “active shooter,” and winter driving and other safety topics)
- Offered and provided a variety of self-care trainings to all staff.

“Every day is a new day to learn & have an impact on someone’s life.”

~ Cindy Pebler, DSP
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Matt Gault
Nicole Giard
Gary Gilmond, Jr.
Lane Gibson
Richie Graham
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Hannafor
Patrick Herbert
Heritage Automotive Group
Brent Hewey
Jennifer Chudnow Huston
Carol Hutcheon
IBM Employee Services Center
Kim Kilpeck
Kinney Drugs Foundation
Kinney Pike Insurance
Robin Lair
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Michelle Paya
Timothy & Georgann Pedrotty
Donald Posner
Price Chopper/Market 32
Price Chopper’s Golub Foundation
John Pierce
David Punia
Liz Moore Reilly
Mike Reilly
Rhino Foods, Inc.
Lucy Rogate
Robyn Ross
Zoltan and Wanda Sachs
Ashwini Sarathy
Anna Seyller
Shaw’s
Sheehy Furlong & Behm PC
Shelburne Farms
Shelburne Museum
Shelburne Vineyard
Miriam Short
Elizabeth Sghtler
Randy Sghtler
George & Doreen Slusser
Mark & Linda Snelling
Virginia Spadaccini
Spirit of Ethan Allen
Chris Staats
Katherine Stockman
TheraManager DocuTrac
Rachel Towers
Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc.
Marianne Treglia
Tamara Ulman
Vermont Community Foundation
Vermont Energy Investment Corp.
Vermont Federal Credit Union
Vermont Parks Forever
Vermont Teddy Bear
The Waite Family
Freyaw Waters
Bruce & Carol Weimer
Douglas & Claire Weston
Jody Whalen & Phil Merrick
Mary Wright
RoZe Yar
David Zuckerman
THANK YOU EVERYONE!
Champlain Community Services (CCS) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation in its 56th year of service to our community. CCS offers support to individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism throughout Northern Vermont.