

RURAL VERMONT 2021 IMPACT REPORT

www.ruralvermont.org | 802-223-7222 | 46 East State St, Montpelier, VT



NEW!

MISSION

Rural Vermont organizes, educates and advocates in collaboration with local and global movements to strengthen the social, ecological and economic health of the agrarian communities that connect us all.

Dear Friends,

In 2021, Rural Vermont solidified its foundation and made great progress in advancing our collective work to build healthy, resilient, and equitable food systems.

As an organization, we laid the groundwork for future success with the creation and launch of our 5-Year Strategic Plan. Part of this process was refreshing our mission (above) and vision to better reflect our values, community, and nature of our work. These updates were largely inspired and driven by our 2018 transition to Sociocracy, a horizontal governance structure characterized by shared leadership, equivalence, effectiveness, and transparency that offers an alternative approach to organizational structure and decision-making, and emphasizes continued improvement. We also worked with Writing Wrongs, LLC to develop an Anti-Racism Policy to institutionalize our commitment to anti-racism and solidarity with BIPOC allies in pursuit of our collective liberation. At our fall Annual Meeting, our membership voted to amend Rural Vermont's by-laws to formally adopt our new governance model and Anti-Racism Policy.

Alongside and because of our community, Rural Vermont celebrated several key legislative gains in 2021. Significant policy changes affecting on-farm slaughter, raw milk sales, and compost foraging have expanded markets and opportunities for farmers while contributing to the resilience and connectedness of our communities. While we were fortunate to have a number of legislative "wins," it's a truism of the process that the outcome, while an improvement, is often imperfect - or in some cases, impermanent. We feel we must acknowledge that the cumulative advances we have made for on-farm slaughter in recent decades and in 2021 are now at risk due to an unsubstantiated USDA claim that Vermont's on-farm slaughter law is not legal. We are actively challenging this opinion and doing everything in our power to protect this traditional practice and the thousands of people who rely upon it.

In the year(s) ahead, we will continue our fight to both maintain and build upon past progress, amplify and uplift the farm(work)ers and most vulnerable among us, and contribute to the movements that are demanding broad-based systemic change in pursuit of a more just and equitable world. We cannot do this work alone, and are so grateful for our community that guides, fuels and funds our efforts. Thank you, and ONWARD!

-The Rural Vermont Team



2021 BOARD

(As seen above - by column, left to right)

Rachel & Ryan Yoder
Sue Buckholz
Meredith Niles
Keith Drinkwine
Nour Noah El-Naboulsi (as of Dec. 2021)
Julie Wolcott
John Cleary
Cat Buxton
Corie Pierce
Silene DeCiuicys
Jeannie Bartlett
Chris Wood
Christine Bourque
Nick Zigelbaum
Marya Merriam (as of Dec. 2021)

2021 STAFF

(As pictured - left to right)

Caroline Gordan
Legislative Director
Emma Paradis
Operations Director
Mollie Wills
Grassroots Organizing Director
Graham Unangst-Rufenacht
Policy Director
Shelby Girard
Development Director
Board and staff bios available online.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

ON-FARM COMPOST FORAGING



After successfully advocating for S. 102 (Act 41) which amends the definition of "farming" under Act 250 and the Required Agricultural Practices to include food residual composting, Rural Vermont joined Poultry Farmers for Compost Foraging for a victory party at Vermont Compost Company.

CANNABIS

As members of the VT Cannabis Equity Coalition, we are working to shape a cannabis economy in VT which is racially just, economically equitable, agriculturally accessible, and environmentally sound. In 2021, we organized and advocated to influence the Cannabis Control Board and rulemaking process, and advocated within the legislature to improve Act 164, the law governing Vermont's emerging cannabis market.



RAW MILK



Rural Vermont successfully advocated for Act 22 which expanded opportunities around sale of and access to raw milk to farmstands and CSAs!

A celebratory raw milk and cookies party at Donegan Family Farm in Charlotte is pictured here.

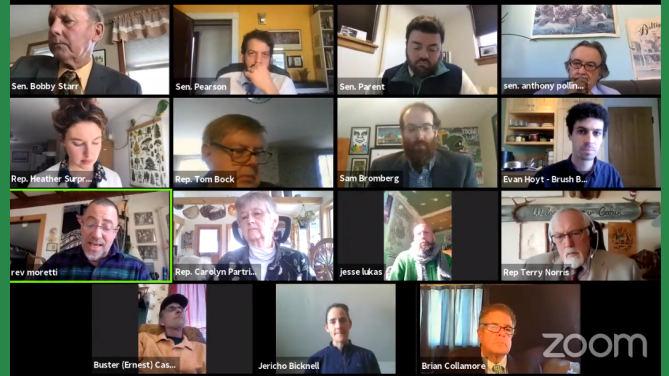
"You rocked it this session. Deep thanks from the trenches - so much of what you were able to accomplish this year greatly impacts our family farm."

- Margaret Loftus, Crossmolina Farm, Corinth

SMALL FARM ACTION DAYS

We hosted our first virtual Small Farm Action Day series in partnership with Action Circles and NOFA-VT which included three advocacy training sessions and two joint hearings for farmers to address their concerns with legislators.

Below, Rural Vermont farmer member, Rev. Moretti, testifies before House and Senate Ag Committees in support of raising the limits for on-farm slaughter.



"The slaughter demonstration was extremely educational and informative. The process was explained well and I now feel confident enough to slaughter poultry alone."

-Anonymous Workshop Participant

ON-FARM SLAUGHTER & MEAT PROCESSING

- In 2021, Rural Vermont:
- Successfully advocated for Act 47, which doubled the allowances for on-farm slaughter (OFS) of livestock and secured the law in perpetuity.
 - Continued participation in the Farm to Plate Meat Processing Task Force.
 - Worked with itinerant slaughterers and butchers to share their fundamental skills with the community including three livestock and two poultry OFS slaughter/processing workshops.

Below, participants learn from butcher Liz Roma (left) at a poultry processing workshop.



COMMUNITY & GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING HIGHLIGHTS

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Rural Vermont works collaboratively with partners, locally and globally, as part of the greater movement that is building the world we need; where everyone's basic needs are met with dignity and we tend to each other and the earth with reciprocity that nourishes generations to come. In 2021, our shared work included:

- Hosting (and co-hosting) two stops on the Migrant Justice Milk with Dignity Tour;
- Amplifying the ag community's assertion that lack of access to affordable healthcare is among the biggest barriers to farm viability by co-organizing for 50+ farmers to submit public comments opposing insurance rate hikes and working with grassroots leaders and a loosely forming coalition to pursue access to universal healthcare for all;
- Supporting the intersectional educational program, Regeneration Corps, as an organizational partner;
- Serving on the Board and Executive Committee of the National Family Farms Coalition, including work opposing corporate farmland investment & acquisition; and,
- Continuing to grow our relationship with La Via Campesina and the global movement for Food Sovereignty.

VERMONT WILD KITCHEN

Rural Vermont joined VT Fish & Wildlife to co-present Vermont Wild Kitchen, a monthly, online cooking program that features VT's farmers, foragers, anglers, and hunters. Each episode reaches thousands of people and brings together the worlds of wild and cultivated foods in VT.



MAKING ART

In summer 2021, we tabled at events across the state and offered art projects to engage folks in creativity, connection, and action calling for an inclusive, just, and equitable farm and food system.

Below, Rural Vermont intern, Olivia St Pierre, shows off a hand printed "Power to the Farmers" notecard.



On that note, we also want to give a shout out to Jake Kornfeld and Charlotte Boyden, who also interned with us in 2021.

THANK YOU!

CLIMATE & SOIL HEALTH

We facilitated policy discussions and share information as part of the Steering Committee of the statewide Soil Health Policy Network and amplify farmer voices in decision making through a Small Farm Advocacy group; advocated for farmer participation in the PES & Soil Health Working Group; and attended and informed the Agriculture & Ecosystems subcommittee of the Climate Council and helped to shape the VT Climate Action Plan with written public comment.

Caroline (RV) joined these three - Jennifer Byrne (White River NRCD), Stephen Leslie (Cedar Mountain Farm) and Alissa White (UVM) - for a soil health meet-up in June!



STATE HOUSE TO FARMHOUSE



In September, we collaborated with 15 agricultural organizations to host our annual State House to Farmhouse events on 12 farms across Vermont. This event brings legislators to farms to learn directly from farmers about what's impacting them.

Rural Vermont's event, pictured here, was held with AALV's New Farms for New Americans Urban Garden Program in Burlington.



Rural Vermont supported the creation of the Vermont Agriculture & Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030 as lead authors on the Healthcare and Childcare briefs, and as contributing authors on the Agroforestry, Alternative Farmland Ownership, and Policy briefs.

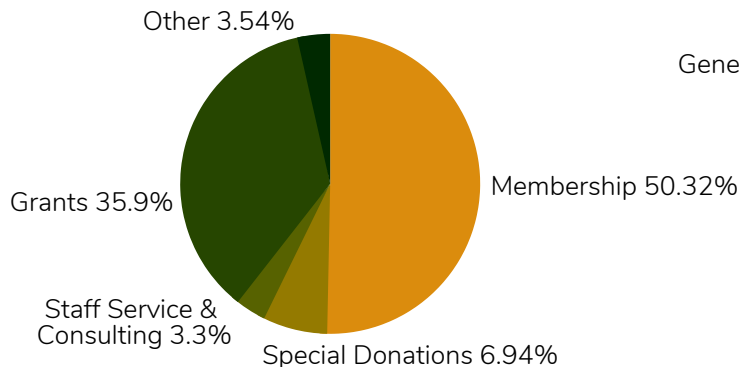
We also sat on the Farm to Plate Steering Committee, chairing the Farmland Access & Stewardship Working Group, and participating in the Meat Processing Task Force.

2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

Starting Balance 2021: \$190,316.02
Ending Balance 2021: \$184,755.15

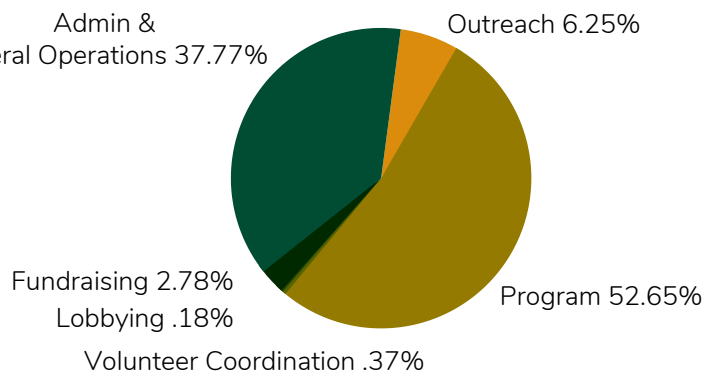
2021 INCOME

Total: \$231,165.84



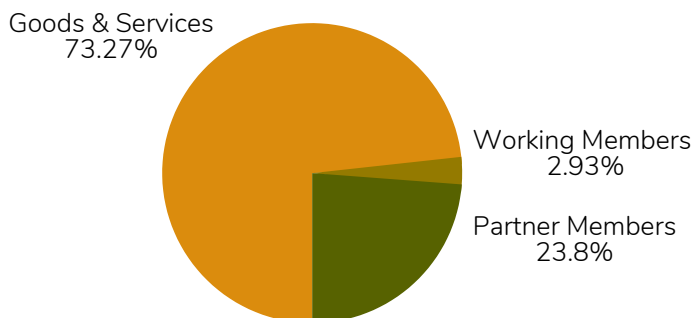
2021 EXPENSES

Total: \$236,925.00



IN-KIND INCOME

Total: \$19,957.50



FISCAL NOTES:

- While membership income increased by nearly 20%, a decline in grant income resulted in a minor net loss for 2021. Rural Vermont's Reserve Fund, which was established in 2017 and has been slowly growing since, offsets such losses.
- These numbers are not audited.
- Form 990s available upon request.

JOIN US!

The support of Rural Vermont's members moves us closer every day and every year to our shared vision for a just and equitable world rooted in reverence for the earth and dignity for all.

If Rural Vermont's values and priorities resonate with you, please consider donating or becoming a member with your single or recurring gift today. Membership dues are sliding scale and start at \$35/year.

Make your donation today at
[ruralvermont.org/donate!](https://ruralvermont.org/donate/)

We also welcome "Working Members" who opt to give their time instead of cash, and aligned business and organizational "Partner Members" who donate \$1K+/year in exchange for an array of benefits. For more info about either option, contact Shelby@ruralvermont.org.



Rural Vermont Board member, Chris Wood, and Legislative Director, Caroline Gordon, tabling at the opening event of the White River Land Collaborative.

"As a young farmer and educator in Vermont, I am glad to support Rural Vermont whenever the opportunity arises. Organizations like Rural Vermont make feeding people and caring for land in this community an exciting and fulfilling path."

-Jake Kornfeld, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps