

VERMONT WORKS FOR WOMEN

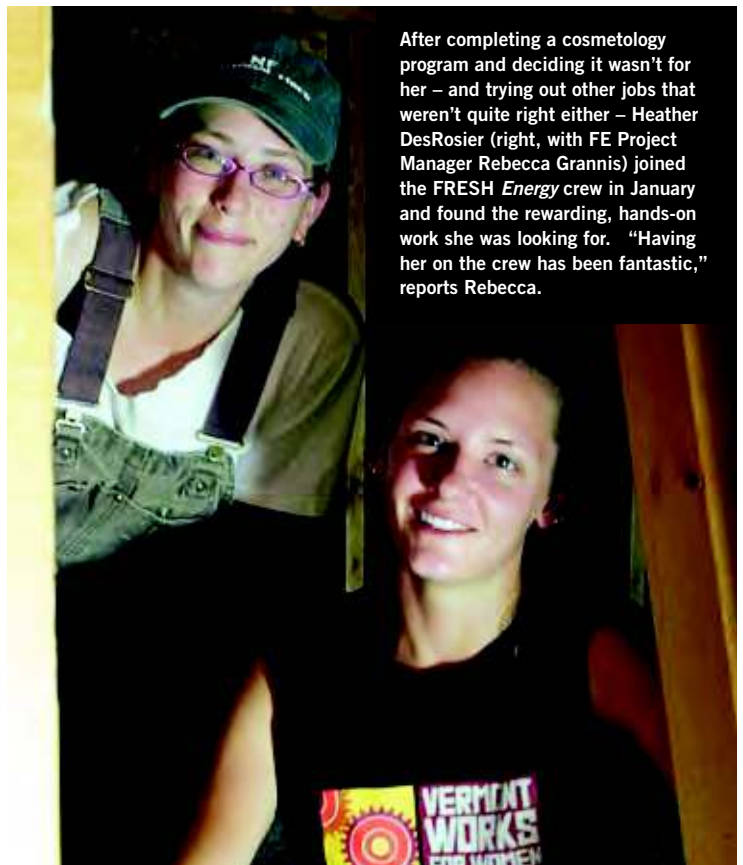
NEWSLETTER Fall 2010 Volume 7 www.vtworksforwomen.org

FRESH Energy: Adapting and Growing

Adaptability has been vital to the initial success of FRESH Energy (FE), Vermont Works for Women's social enterprise that was launched last October to train and employ women in the fields of construction, efficiency and renewable energy. Operating at the beginning primarily as a subcontractor to the local commercial construction company **J.A. Morrissey** to weatherize Burlington's Northgate housing community, FE has reached out to new partners to identify important work and on-the-job training opportunities. "Our original plan was to augment weatherization work with solar tracker installation," said Rebecca Grannis, FRESH Energy's lead

installer and project manager. "As **AllEarth Renewables** was refining its solar trackers, we needed to find jobs to keep our newly-trained crew working."

Enter a series of productive and meaningful new partnerships that have generated income for FE and, as important, on-going work for the crew. **Champlain Housing Trust**, for example, hired FE to perform energy audits and weatherization of recently purchased properties, and the **Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity** contracted with FE to meet their needs for temporary weatherization installers in both their St. Albans and Hinesburg offices, resulting in hundreds of hours of work for the crew. Other direct and in-kind support has been equally valuable. For example, the



After completing a cosmetology program and deciding it wasn't for her – and trying out other jobs that weren't quite right either – Heather DesRosier (right, with FE Project Manager Rebecca Grannis) joined the FRESH Energy crew in January and found the rewarding, hands-on work she was looking for. "Having her on the crew has been fantastic," reports Rebecca.

We thank the following partners for their technical, in-kind, and direct support of FRESH Energy:

- Business and Professional Women's Foundation
- Champlain Housing Trust
- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
- Efficiency Vermont
- Great Bay Foundation
- J.A. Morrissey
- Lewis Creek Builders
- ReSource's YouthBuild program
- U.S. Department of Labor – Women's Bureau
- Vermont Energy Investment Corporation
- VT Green at Central VermontCommunity Action Council
- Walmart Foundation

Vermont Works for Women is sporting a new look these days. Our new logo appears above and will – over the course of the next few months – begin to be incorporated into all of our promotional materials.

While you may have to wait for it to appear on your favorite brochure, you don't have to wait to wear it. New VWW t-shirts (which make great birthday or holiday gifts!) are available for \$18 plus \$5 for shipping and handling. **To order, contact Staci Grove at sgrove@vtworksforwomen.org or 802-655-8900, ext. 100. Provide your color choice (black or white) and size (s, m, l, xl or xxl).**



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A Tribute to Frank Hatch



Tiffany Bluemle with Frank Hatch

[Frank Hatch, philanthropist and long-time friend of VWW, passed away last April. In recognition of the extraordinary legacy he left both VWW and countless other nonprofits in Vermont and beyond, Executive Director Tiffany Bluemle penned the following tribute.]

I met Frank thirteen years ago on a hot afternoon when he and six members of his long-legged family folded themselves into a circle of chairs in our Barre office. I was a new executive director, wet behind the ears, grateful for every week that passed without serious incident and thankful if I didn't do something that threatened irreparable damage. Perhaps sensing my nervousness (it was my first foundation site visit ever), Frank made a point of nodding and flashing his crinkly smile in our first fifteen minutes. I calmed down, the visit went fine, and I breathed a sigh of relief as they filed out of the cramped room.

It is an image I remember so well, not because it is a singular

moment, but because it was the first of many such moments over the years. In prior newsletters I have noted the ways in which the Merck Fund, and Frank, have contributed to our growth and direction. But Frank's particular contribution to Vermont Works for Women, and to me, was the gift of his personal partnership. In the thirteen years I knew him, we probably spent no more than ten hours together – and yet I think that no one has influenced my work or my thinking more than Frank.

Frank was both mentor and cheerleader. When my thinking grew cramped, he prodded me to be more expansive. When I admitted self-doubt, Frank provided perspective and encouragement. When he called to say hello, our conversations often began with the words “what do you need?” Frank's vigorous generosity was unusual in its consistency and spontaneity. I have often mused that everyone deserves to have had a Frank Hatch in their lives – and marvel at the impossibly good luck that I did.



It is with heavy hearts that we announce that **Kristen Mullins (left)**, Director of Programs at VWW for the last six years, has left us to pursue a new work opportunity and graduate study at the University of Vermont. Kristen's passion for the VWW mission was always front and center, and her ability to inspire and encourage both program participants and her fellow staff members was one of her many gifts. We thank Kristen for all she contributed, and we wish her the best in her future endeavors. We feel incredibly lucky to announce that **Rachel Jolly** will assume Kristen's responsibilities as Director of Programs this fall. Rachel has served on staff as a program coordinator for three years and has accumulated over a dozen years of experience in program design and implementation.

Mission

Vermont Works for Women helps women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue, and excel in work that leads to economic independence.

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AmeriCorps/VISTA - Girls Programs

Lucy Comstock-Gay
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Installer/Project Manager

Staci Grove Office Coordinator

Rachel Jolly Director of Programs

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Louise Mastin Transitional Jobs
Coordinator/Chittenden County

Molly O'Brien AmeriCorps/VISTA -
Transitional Jobs Program

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Leigh Steele Program Coordinator
(initiatives for incarcerated women)

Kelly Walsh, Program Coordinator -
Girls Programs

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Vermont Works for Women Newsletter is published once a year by: Vermont Works for Women - 32A Malletts Bay Ave., Winooski, VT 05404 802-655-8900/802-655-8922 (fax) www.vtworksforwomen.org www.rosiesgirls.org Please share your email address with us so we can add you to the list of recipients of our soon-to-be-launched monthly e-newsletter. Send it to VWW office coordinator Staci Grove at sgrove@vtworksforwomen.org.

Transitional Jobs: On the Move

Thanks to a new partnership with the **Vermont Agency of Human Services**, and with funding through the State's Creative Workforce Solutions initiative, VWW is expanding its Transitional Jobs program to Barre and Central Vermont for women with disabilities and women moving from public assistance to work, or from incarceration back to the community. VWW is excited about this partnership and the opportunity it provides to offer skill development and transitional work experiences to women there, as is AHS. "The core philosophy of Creative Workforce Solutions is that employment is the key to recovery of all kinds, the catalyst for reduction of benefits dependence, and a way to break the cycles of generational poverty and Corrections involvement," said Hugh Bradshaw, Employment Services Manager at **VocRehab Vermont**. "Vermont Works for Women is uniquely qualified to provide support and guidance to Vermont women who need to transition to the world of work. We see the TJ Program as a key cog in the CWS "wheel" and look forward to this new and innovative partnership."

For more information about TJ services in central Vermont, contact Sarah Loveless at 802-881-3992 or sloveless@vtworksforwomen.org.

FRESH Food, another exciting new expansion of the TJ program, is preparing to launch this winter as VWW's second social enterprise. To be based out of the kitchen at the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski, *FRESH Food* will serve as an on-the-job training program in the culinary arts for women with significant barriers to employment. After conversations with the **Campaign to End Childhood Hunger** and **United Way of Chittenden County**, we learned that Vermont day care centers – because many have neither the staff nor the facilities to offer meals to their children – are second to last in the country in accessing federal food subsidies for children. *FRESH Food* will meet that need by preparing nutritious, balanced meals for these centers. The crew will derive other work (and additional revenue for the enterprise) by partnering with a local restaurant in Burlington. When the crew is confident and more experienced, they will branch out to work with regional food producers as highly-qualified temporary workers during peak seasons. We thank **Jane's Trust** and the **Hendrickson Family Foundation** for critical start-up funding for this project. For more information on *FRESH Food*, contact Tiffany Bluemle at 802-655-8900, ext. 101, or tbluemle@vtworksforwomen.org.



With the backing of VWW's Transitional Jobs program – along with a supportive employer and a commitment to succeed – **Jen Fuller** has turned her life around. **Turning Point Center**, a recovery support organization in Burlington, offered Jen a temporary, transitional job back in February of 2009. Her strong work ethic and easy connection with participants resulted in a permanent position there as a recovery coach, a position she is rightly proud of. Congratulations, Jen!

"By providing employment opportunities, the Transitional Jobs program not only provides hope for its participants, it also enhances public safety for our community in a cost effective way. A good job is the best form of public safety. I'm proud to partner with the Transitional Jobs program in our fight against crime!"

– T.J. Donovan, State's Attorney, Chittenden County



Local employers who hire program participants in short-term, part-time positions are critical to the effectiveness of the TJ program. We thank **T.J. Donovan, Chittenden County's State's Attorney**, and **Heather Kendrew**, Director of Maintenance and Engineering at **Burlington International Airport** (left), for their active participation – as well as the nearly 90 other employers who have partnered with us to support women in gaining the workplace confidence and skills they need to obtain permanent, full-time employment.

ROSIE'S GIRLS Tracking Impact



all of the things she had the opportunity to do that summer because of Rosie's Girls – row, learn about solar panels, meet new friends (including girls that did not look like her), and talk to women who had amazing jobs she didn't even know girls could have such as firefighting or construction work. I finally asked the young woman if she indeed had attended the Rosie's Girls camp and she confirmed that she had. She shared with me that she really loved that camp and how much that summer taught her . . . not just about rowing and solar panels, but about herself. That she was strong and that she was capable. She was a Rosie's Girl."

For more information about Rosie's Girls, contact Kelly Walsh at 802-655-8900, ext. 105 or kwalsh@vtworksforwomen.org. Watch the Rosie's Girls' website for camp dates for 2011 and registration information (www.rosiesgirls.org).

Since last fall, VWW has had the opportunity to work with Professors Jackie Weinstock and Lynne Bond from the University of Vermont to review and improve the evaluation tools we use for the Rosie's Girls program in Vermont and beyond. Jackie and Lynne come to the project with years of experience in psychology and human development, gender and women's studies, and the design and use of qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools. This fall, they will analyze the data that was collected this summer to both assess the program's impact across sites and the effectiveness of the new instruments they have developed.

They are also engaged in collecting stories from graduates from years past to help us measure the program's impact over time. Last summer, we received an email with such a story, which we thought worth sharing below:

"A few months ago I was riding the subway train here in Cleveland and two young women were in the seat next to me. As the train traveled over the Cuyahoga River one of the girls got really excited and began telling her friend about how a few years ago when she was a little girl she had the opportunity to row on that very river in a boat with eight other girls when she attended "camp." Right away I knew she was a Rosie's Girl! She proceeded to tell her friend about



Meet Mia, Rosie's Girl

Extraordinaire! Mia Mears is no stranger to Vermont Works for Women. This sixteen year old sophomore at Williamstown High School is a veteran on the Rosie's Girls Barre staff team, returning for the summer of 2010 as a Second-Year Counselor in Training. She also attended the 2009 Women Can Do Conference for high school girls at Vermont Technical College last October. AND she participated in the 2009 Career Challenge Day at Randolph Technical Career Center last November. Mia is the FIRST person to participate in all three of these programs, and we are thrilled every time

we see her name on the registration list! Mia's love for the trades is evident. She excels in the carpentry shop and feels equally at home under the hood of a car or wielding a plasma cutter. Each of our programs benefits from Mia's enthusiasm and energy and we are delighted to see her pursue her passion for the trades! We hope to see Mia at Rosie's Girls 2011, and at Women Can Do and Career Challenge Day 2010! Thanks, Mia, for being a role model to us all, young and old!

Fresh Energy - Continued from front page

Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity invited the FE crew to participate in group cellulose installer certification training and generously gave the project a used cellulose blower.

Additional work will result from Grannis' completion of Building Performance Instruction certification (allowing FE to work as an independent contractor) as well as efforts underway for the business to become a preferred contractor for Vermont Gas, a natural gas supplier that serves over 40,000 customers in Northwestern Vermont.

There will be a considerable number of new jobs created

by increased building efficiency retrofit activity in the coming years. Based on Vermont Energy Investment Corporation's estimates, the field will require nearly 1,000 new workers to meet emerging demand over the next ten years – over half of whom will be trained as weatherization technicians. VWW and FRESH Energy plan to ensure that as many women as possible are ready to step into this growing field as trained and experienced workers.

To hire FRESH Energy for expert residential or commercial weatherization services, contact Rebecca Grannis at (802) 655-8900, x506 or rgrannis@vtworksforwomen.org.

News and Notes

Board Happenings

The VWW Board and staff thank retiring board member **Mary Claire Carroll** for six years of exceptional service to VWW. Her passion and service made a difference to women and girls in Vermont – and we will miss her! A warm welcome to **Retta Huttlinger** who joined the Board in May. Retta is Manager of Major Gifts at Vermont Public Radio, and we look forward to benefiting from her expertise in this area as well as her overall guidance and support of VWW's programs and activities.



Retta Huttlinger

Mentoring Training in October

Vermont Women's Mentoring Program, a partnership between VWW and **Mercy Connections**, is holding training for new mentors on Wednesday evenings in October (Oct. 6, 13, 20, and 27) from 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Mercy Connections. If you are a good listener, have an open mind, and want to help a woman returning to the community from a correctional facility make a fresh start, we invite you to find out more about serving as a volunteer mentor. To register or for more information, contact **Pam Green** at Mercy Connections: 802-846-7164 or pgreene@mercyconnections.org. Additional information can be obtained from **Leigh Steele** at VWW at 802-655-8900, ext. 104 or lsteel@vtworksforwomen.org.

VWW 12th Annual Women Can Do Conference



This all-day conference for high school girls interested in nontraditional careers and/or technical education is scheduled for Wednesday, October 13th at **Vermont Technical College** in Randolph Center. New this year is the *Action Expo*, an exhibition of trades and technology careers with opportunities for hands-on testing of new tools and techniques.

For more information, contact **Kelly Walsh**, conference coordinator, at 802-655-8900, ext. 105 or kwalsh@vtworksforwomen.org.

Support VWW each and every month!

By signing up to make a monthly gift to VWW, you can make a larger annual gift to VWW in way that more easily fits your monthly budget. And as important, being able to count on

regular monthly gifts is helpful to VWW in planning for program and operational needs. Simply go to www.vtworksforwomen.org and click on "make a donation," then on "I want to make a recurring donation ... monthly, every three months, or annually." For assistance with signing up, contact **Lucy Comstock-Gay** at 802-655-8900, ext. 110 or lcomstockgay@vtworksforwomen.org.

Congratulations to Lynn Vera – Winner of the YWCA Vermont's 2010 THRIVE Award

VWW's Board and Staff send warm wishes to long-time partner Lynn Vera for this well-deserved honor. Among her other many contributions to our community, Lynn has – as Guidance Counselor at the Center for Technology, Essex and as a member of the state's Workforce Development Council – pushed vigorously to raise the visibility of technical education, to support women and girls who pursue nontraditional careers and to address cultural biases or policies that limit their choices and success. Her impact has been far-reaching and profound.

To join in the celebration scheduled for Thursday, October 21st at noon on the Northern Lights (Lake Champlain Cruises, King Street dock), contact the YWCA of Vermont at 802-863-2568.

Come enjoy a great dinner while supporting VWW at the same time!

Join us at the **Bluebird Tavern** (317 Riverside Avenue in Burlington) on November 10th from 4 to 10pm and help VWW receive 10% of the total sales for the evening. For more information, contact **Lucy Comstock-Gay**, Development Director, at 802-655-8900, ext. 110 or lcomstockgay@vtworksforwomen.org.

2010 Barre and Essex Rosie's Girls

Reunions have been tentatively scheduled for the following dates. Watch for an invitation with details, and get ready to have fun reconnecting with fellow campers, staff, and CITs.



Essex – Saturday, January 29
Barre – Saturday, February 12th

Liza Minelli ticket raffle to support VWW

Try your chance at winning a pair of premier seats at the Flynn Center to enjoy the legendary Liza Minnelli performing American standards in a "glorious and intimate performance" ... and support VWW at the same time. November 3rd at 7:30 pm; raffle tickets are \$25 each (for two seats) and are on sale until 5 pm on October 27th at www.vtworksforwomen.org. **Winners will be notified on October 28th.**

Step Up to Law Enforcement Steps It Up

After fielding 124 calls of inquiry for the spring Step Up to Law Enforcement (SULE) class, program coordinator Rachel Jolly is convinced more than ever of the value of the program. “Women recognize the opportunities that await them in the traditionally-male policing and corrections fields,” she said. “VWW can make a huge difference in helping them prepare both mentally and physically for the rigors of these

careers.” The value of SULE is reinforced by our policing and corrections partners who are eager to bring women onto their forces. As one reported, “A diverse workforce is a smarter and better service delivery team than a non-diverse one. The program is not only important to my department but to the profession as a whole.”

Ready to reap all the benefits the nine week, pre-Academy job training program would offer, the SULE class of 2010 – consisting of eight women from Franklin, Chittenden, Washington, and Addison Counties – displayed remarkable perseverance and seriousness in their work with the over forty visiting skilled trainers and facilitators in the classroom and in the field. As of mid-September, 50% of the students had found work in law enforcement – a record setting success rate so soon after the end of the program. Thank you to the **Vermont Department of Labor**, **The Vermont Women’s Fund**, and **The Vermont Community Foundation** for their support of SULE.

The next SULE class is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2011. **For more information, contact Rachel Jolly at 802-655-8900, ext. 106 or rjolly@vtworksforwomen.org.**



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