



VT Women at Work

Fall 2009

Volume 5

New Summer Youth Employment Pilot: Chef Works! & Energy Works!

In June, VWV launched two new summer youth initiatives for 19 young women, ages 17-24, with limited work experience. Chef Works! and Energy Works! were designed as experiential and intensive, and required active participation and reflection in a small team-based environment. In addition to industry-specific technical skills, work readiness and life skill development was deliberately woven throughout all employment, training, and evaluative activities. The programs, which were part of a larger state youth employment initiative, were supported and funded by the **Vermont Department of Labor**.



Energy Works!

Energy Works!, a collaboration involving VWV, **Efficiency Vermont** and **Vermont Gas**, sent teams to visit homes in Milton, South Burlington, Richmond, Williston, and Shelburne to advise residents about reducing energy use, meeting their home heating needs, and increasing awareness of state efficiency services. Over the course of the summer, teams visited 80 homes, checking water meter and pressure, inspecting faucets and toilets for their efficiency and for leaks, installing free faucet aerators and high pressure showerheads, installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, identifying electrical fixtures that waste energy, and wrapping electric hot water heater tanks and pipes.

"I learned a lot of interesting things on how to save energy. As well as how to save energy and heat by insulating your house."

— MALYUN KASSIM, program participant

The project, which was modeled on a pilot project sponsored by **Efficiency Vermont** and on the experience of a highly successful California project, provided crew members exposure to professionals in fields that are experiencing significant growth, among them weatherization, energy auditing, and solar panel installation.

Chef Works!

Another crew of ten young women rolled up their sleeves, sharpened their knives, and plunged into seven weeks of training and employment in the culinary arts. Chef Works! is a true community partnership, drawing particularly on the **City of Winooski** and the **Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger**, but involving also the kitchens of the **Burlington School District's Farm to Schools** program, the convent of **Our Lady of Providence, Samosaman** (a Winooski-based entrepreneurial venture), and **Winooski's THRIVE program**, a summer program serving meals and providing activities to over 100 city youth. Crew members also participate in shopping for, and preparing, weekly community dinners for our neighbor nonprofit, **Neighborkeepers**.

Crew members learned basic knife skills and a full range of food preparation skills and received ServSafe training and certification. Through their placements, they were exposed to activities critical to the business of the food operation – budgeting, ordering, managing inventory, menu planning, and customer service. Through delivering and serving meals, they developed skills related to customer service. And through our collaboration with the **VT Campaign to End Childhood Hunger**,



participants received significant instruction related to nutrition. The skills are transferable. The work they did made a difference to the well-being of many community members. Their nutritional education will, we hope, influence daily individual and, perhaps, family choices.

Our hats are off to the program's participants, its coordinators – Kiona Baez, Miriam Balsley, DeAnna Bevilacqua, Amber DeVoss – and our community partners! We hope to continue these programs in the coming summer. ■

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Mission

VERMONT WORKS FOR WOMEN helps women and girls explore, pursue and excel in nontraditional careers that pay a livable wage.

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www.rosiesgirls.org

Celebrating Our New Home in Winooski

On June 4th, over 200 guests joined us to celebrate completion of our new program headquarters in Winooski, Vermont. Below are VWW executive director Tiffany Bluemle's opening remarks.

Vermont Works for Women has been doing its work in the Green Mountain state for 23 years. And while we're proud of what we've accomplished, we're quick to say that anything we have done has been achieved through partnership, with the support of colleagues, allies and friends.

Certainly this *building* was a collaborative project. It required a creative partnership with the City of Winooski and the vision of its Director of Economic Development, **J Ladd**. The building is the product of many women's hands – our brilliant and generous architect, **Ann Vivian**; our clear-headed and equally brilliant general contractor, **Jeanne Morrissey**; our diligent and extraordinarily patient project manager, **Annie Goff**; VWW Board member, program graduate, and builder extraordinaire **Amy Judd**; and metal artist and VWW Board member, **Kat Clear**.

But this building also bears the imprint of many wonderful men from J.A. Morrissey Construction – among them, **Todd Bergeron**, **Dan Bergeron**, **Dick Boudah**, **Karl Bortz**, **Bill Cross**, **Brody Cusick**, and **Jake Rugg**.

The building was demolished, wired, and painted in part by nearly fifty volunteers – staff and Board members, program graduates and friends – who gave up evenings and weekends throughout the year to help us cut down costs. Their efforts saved about \$15,000. We've listed their names in the program and on our wall of honor inside.

And it required the financial commitment of friends who believed in our mission, recognized the wisdom of making this capital investment now, and trusted in our capacity to stick around for a good long time – among them Bari and Peter Dreissegacker, Lake Champlain Transportation, Valerie Graham, Susan Ritz, Elizabeth Steele, and Julie Hendrickson.

We are honored to be Winooski residents and members of its new, already vital community center. We are glad to have, at long last, come home.

Rosie Awards

On June 4th at its Open House, VWW recognized three community members whose contributions to our work – and to the girls



Brenda Bisbee (right) receives an award at the Open House celebration

and women who are the focus of our attention – have been sustained and profound.

Brenda Bisbee

Brenda was honored for the impact she has had on thousands of women and girls throughout the state in her role as a founder and Council member of the Vermont Women's Fund. In the tenth year of Rosie's Girls, a program that got its start with Fund support, we recognized the important role she has played in nurturing this program from its infancy to the present.

Jill Evans

It was our honor to recognize Jill Evans, Director of Women and Family Services for the VT Department of Corrections whose commitment to women in prison spans more than twenty-five years. Jill has been critical to galvanizing energy behind so many important efforts – establishing a mentoring program, focusing attention on the children of women in prison, founding Northern Lights House, moving a department towards policies and practices that are responsive to gender, and ultimately reducing the number of women serving time in Vermont prisons. Jill possesses untiring persistence, courage and, when the going gets tough, a terrific sense of humor.

Elizabeth Shayne and Rebecca Esch

As we celebrate a milestone for VWW, we wanted to take a moment to recognize two extraordinary women who had the vision to found and develop one of VWW's core programs, Rosie's Girls: Elizabeth Shayne and Dr. Rebecca Esch. Ten years after the program's founding, on behalf of the 1,200 girls whose lives have been touched by the Rosie's Girls program, we thank and honor their vision, passion, and commitment to building strong girls. ■

Burlington International Airport Hires Program Graduate

The Transitional Jobs (TJ) program, which began in November of 2008, has many success stories to share. One of those is Marie, a graduate of the program, who is now receiving glowing reports from her supervisors at the Burlington International Airport.

TJ, a job-training program for women transitioning out of incarceration or off of state assistance, combines the 'soft skills' of employability (assertive communication, cover letter and resume development, interview practice, dressing appropriately for the workplace, etc) with a part-time, twelve-week position with area employers. The program grew out of work initiated through a Strategic Partners grant from the **Vermont Women's Fund**; it is now supported in part through grants from the **United Way of Chittenden County** and the **Hendrickson Foundation**.

Marie originally came to VWW in December 2008 and was accepted into the program in January. She had held one job working for her family's grocery store but had been out of the workforce for years. Though she had a strong start with us, she had to discontinue her participation when her housing situation became unstable. She showed her determination to be part of the program by staying in touch with us, getting stable housing and interviewing a second time for a spot in the next round of TJ.

Marie is no-nonsense, straightforward person who has the goal of giving her son a home and an upbringing that will be a good



Marie helps beautify the airport grounds

environment for him. Marie experienced dramatic growth during the fourteen week program; she started TJ not looking anyone in the eye and now she smiles and looks right at you and has become a vocal self advocate and spokesperson for others. In June, Marie began a job at the **Burlington International Airport** in the Landscaping

and Maintenance department. Her direct supervisor commented that she has already outworked the previous two men they had in her position and her employer tells us, "I want to let you know how happy we've been to participate in the program and to have Marie here. She is a great employee and a hard worker; she has a lot of potential!" ■

2009 Burlington Clothes Exchange

Vermont Works for Women was honored to be chosen as the beneficiary of this year's Burlington Clothes Exchange. More than 500 women turned out to shop the May event



BCE Steering Committee Members

and learn more about VWW's mission. It was a shoppers delight and a bargain hunter's dream. Although some feared the economy would have a negative impact on the CE's fundraising efforts, a record \$55,000 was raised in support of VWW's programs. Learn more at www.theclothesexchange.org.

This event could not have happened without the leadership of The Burlington Clothes Exchange Steering Committee: Alana Lowry, Amy Bacon, Anna Rosenblum Palmer, Deb Lichtenfeld, Elzy Wick, Kelli Shonter, Leigh Samuels, Nancy Westbrook and Leslie Halperin; more than 60 volunteers; our generous business and retail partners and the hundreds of shoppers that turned out to shop for a cause!

Thanks to all! ■

Check out the **NEW**
Rosie's Girls website at:
www.rosiesgirls.org

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ROSIE'S GIRLS

Celebrates 10 Years!



Welding is some serious fun in Essex, VT

For the 10th summer, middle school girls across the country had a chance to get their hands dirty – building, welding, firefighting, climbing, boxing, creating – while developing a broad sense of who they are and what they can become. Over 250 girls participated in 12 sessions in 11 locations across the country between June 15 and August 21. Four sites ran their first programs this summer – Weld-Ed at Lorain Community College in Elyria, OH; Richmond, CA; Proctor, VT and Bennington, VT.

Nationwide, each program includes core elements of the Rosie's Girls program – hands-on skilled trades activities, arts activities designed to promote self expression, “girls world” activities designed to encourage looking at the world with

a critical eye and physically challenging activities to encourage stretching beyond one's physical comfort zone. Each site, however, puts its own “spin” on the program, taking advantage of the unique opportunities available to them and the organization(s) involved in running the program.

Below are a few examples of the ways that our partners have taken Vermont Works for Women's program model and made it their own.

Elyria (Ohio)

Weld-Ed, a national center for welding education and training located at Lorain Community College piloted a welding-centered Rosie's Girls program. Other activities included computer aided design (CAD), manufacturing and electronics – career fields in which women continue to be underrepresented. The girls gave the program rave reviews.

Santa Monica (California)

Activities in the Rosie's Girls program in Santa Monica, CA – lodged within the City's Environmental and Public Works and Community and Cultural Services Departments – focus on encouraging civic engagement and increasing girls' understanding of the role local government plays in citizens' lives. Program participants work with City TV (the local public access station) to create a mock city council session in which they are challenged to negotiate the city's budget. Girls rotate through four “stations” – city councilor, community member, observer and film and edit crew.

The program continued its work with The Sojourn, a shelter for battered women and their children. Sojourn staff provided educational programming to help girls explore, understand and ultimately prevent violence. Participants worked with local artists to design anti-violence posters that will be posted in the city's municipal buses.

Richmond (California)

The National Parks Service in Richmond, CA – home of the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park – joined forces with the YMCA of the East Bay and numerous local supporters to bring to life the city's ship building history in its Rosie's Girls program. Using their carpentry skills, Richmond Rosie's Girls



Wood working in Cincinnati, OH

designed and co-installed a series of stepping stones in conjunction with a high school group, the Victory Garden Youth Corps. The Victory Garden and stepping stones are located at a local elementary school and are intended to raise awareness of Richmond's history while bringing local food to the community.

Betty Soskin, an 87 year-old Park Ranger and authentic Rosie the Riveter, arranged the “sheroes” portion of the program to give the girls an opportunity to meet successful career women including artists, publishers, vice presidents of major corporations, political activists, the former mayor of Richmond and building and trades professionals.

Girls in the flagship Essex, VT program designed awards for one another using their creativity and new-found carpentry skills.

Awards included:

**Connector Award
Class Clown Award
Steward of the Earth
Chicksaw Award
Speed Demon Award
Practically Perfect in Every Trade**

**Bubbly Buddy Award
Happy Face Award
Buffing Bookish Butterfly Award
Colossal Comic Comedian Super Carpenter
Auto Apprentice Award
Gutsy Grimy Maverick Mechanic Award**



Participants in Brattleboro, VT challenge themselves with white-water rafting

Bennington (Vermont)

The Rosie's Girls program in Bennington has "gone green." The program's core trades activities centered on alternative energy



Bike repair in Essex, VT

themes, including an energy usage analysis of a greenhouse, designing and building solar and earth ovens and extending their bike repair instruction to include ways to "motorize" their bikes (to lessen dependence on fossil fuels). The girls also created art projects using recycled materials.

Hats Off!

Rosie's Girls would not be possible without the hard work, dedication and incredible creativity of the numerous individuals, organizations, corporations, foundations and municipalities who have invested their time and effort to bringing the program to their areas. Vermont Works for Women is deeply grateful to everyone who has worked to keep the program going and growing. To see a list of funders, replication sites and participating organizations, go to www.rosiesgirls.org. ■



11th Annual Women Can Do!

Our eleventh annual Women Can Do conference will take place **October 15th, 2009** at Vermont Technical College in Randolph. This year's conference will have over 30 hands-on workshops taught by skilled professionals on everything from auto repair to computer animation. High school girls from all over the state will converge on the VTC campus for a day of learning and fun, thanks to generous support from the Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Technical College, many state technical education centers and other organizations and businesses. For a complete listing of sponsors, workshops, and tons of other information, log on to www.vtworksforwomen.org. ■

New Rosie's Girls Website Launched

Rosie's Girls has a new home – www.rosiesgirls.org. It's a place to learn more about the program, download the brochure, see the video, read news coverage, check out photos from sites across the country, read parent testimonials, download forms and directions and read quotes from participants to understand more about the impact the program has on the lives of young women. Potential sites can have all their questions answered in one place, and there's also a password-protected area where all sites can share information and gain access to documents and tools needed to run an effective camp. Want to see RG in your area? Go to www.rosiesgirls.org and click on "Bring Rosie's Girls to your area" in the upper right corner. Want to donate? You can do that, too, just click on "Make a Donation" and 100% of your gift will help support scholarships. Tell your friends! ■

Thanks to the Permanent Fund

We would like to recognize and thank the Permanent Fund for the Well-Being of Vermont Children for their pivotal role in bolstering Rosie's Girls replication efforts across Vermont. Through their investment, Rosie's Girls has spread from two to six sites in VT in just three years.

"Replicating Rosie's Girls was a good investment for the Permanent Fund because we believe so strongly in the life-changing impact of the program and the capacity of VWW to implement a sustainable replication strategy in communities statewide."

– CHRISTINE ZACHAI, Executive Director



VWW Launches First “Green” Step Up to Carpentry!

In late April of 2009, we ran our first “green” Step Up to Carpentry class. The Step Up to Carpentry job-training program model began twenty-three years ago when our organization first began. Through the years it has adapted to fit with the changing needs of women, funding sources and world events! This year’s program was a six-week training for women interested in careers in carpentry and construction which gave special focus to the sustainable building industry.

100% of our participants were unemployed at the time of enrollment. The eight enthusiastic participants from three VT counties maintained an excellent attendance record throughout the program. The new ‘green’ focus received highly favorable reviews in student evaluation forms and employer contractors gave us similarly encouraging feedback. New topics incorporated included a career ladder panel with five professionals from the green building industry discussing professional opportunities for varying levels of education, a presentation on LEED (Leadership in Environmental & Energy Design) and other ‘green’ certifications during a field trip to a local LEED-

certified building, field trips to Recycle North and Curtis Lumber to discuss shopping with a ‘green eye’ and a straw-bale presentation and hands-on session with a local architect and alternative builder.

Other highlights of the class included a blueprint reading workshop by a local architect, two nutrition and upper/core body strength sessions taught by a certified personal trainer, a hands-on, interactive workshop on dry walling, a self-employment panel and a 3-hour certification in adult, child and infant CPR.

“I have regained confidence and a higher respect for who I am and what I can achieve when given the opportunity.”

– GREEN CARPENTRY PARTICIPANT



Half way through the course, the class shows their pride in their structure

The hands-on building days allowed students to gain experience in a wide variety of the basic hand and power tools, planning and design, framing, roofing, window installation and trim work through their work on an 8x10 garden shed. An important element of the class—job shadows with area contractors—went exceptionally well and the majority of students opted to volunteer many more hours than what was required, with some students contributing 40-70 hours of their time on job sites with our employer partners. Two graduates were able to gain more experience while building a counter top for the Intervale Foundation in Burlington. One graduate has already been hired by a construction company in her home region of Franklin County. ■

Transitional Jobs Program has Terrific First Year



Ashley helps with animal care at ECHO

With funding in part from the United Way of Chittenden County, we developed the Transitional Jobs program to work with women who are transitioning out of incarceration or off of state assistance into the workforce.

Many participants have childcare, housing and transportation issues on top of commitments to the Departments of Corrections and Children and Families, counseling, meetings and commitments to other services.

Program coordinators work closely with a variety of area employers, including **New England Air Systems, The Sheraton, Intervale Compost Products, ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center, Burlington International Airport and the Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf.** They also work closely with the **Department of Labor and the Workforce Investment Act;** this program subsidizes wages for eligible employees for a period of time. If you know



of any employer who might be interested in working with us, please let us know! ■

“This class was a great help to me. It restored my hope when I was out. I was looking for a job for months and couldn’t get anyone to take a chance on me. I thought I’d never get hired. The class in turn helped raise my self-esteem by teaching new skills and by opening my eyes to see skills I already had.”

– TJ PARTICIPANT

VWW Welcomes New Members to its Board of Directors

Katherine "Kat" Clear

Kat is a skilled artist and metal sculptor with an art degree from the University of Vermont. In 2000, she attended the California College of Arts and Crafts where she studied metalworking. After graduation she began her career, and produced her first body of work under the mentorship of sculptor Bill Heise. She is a gifted artist and teacher, and has taught at *Rosie's Girls* and *Women Can Do* for many years. Kat has recently launched a custom metalworking business which focuses on metal signage and unique metal accoutrements for the home and commercial installation. Since the inception of her Vermont based business in 2004, it has been her goal, and main focus, to enhance the surroundings

with interesting sculpture and metal work.
www.katherineclear.com

Christa Shute

Christa was born and raised in Vermont and received her Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Bard College in upstate NY. She has a long history as a prominent Vermont businesswoman. She began her career working for her father's companies Hearthstone and International Mineral Resources, Inc. She co-founded CompuValve LLC and Caldera Corporation with her family and then became CEO and President of both companies. She then became the Vice President of Business Development at Earth Turbines, Inc. where she helped negotiate a contract with the Vermont Telecommunications Authority which will help provide all Vermonters with access to cellular communications and broadband. She is presently an independent contractor for the VTA. ■

THANKS to all our 2009 supporters and a special welcome and thanks to our NEW friends!

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In the near future, we hope to offer an electronic version of our newsletter in an effort to conserve the earth's natural resources and to save money. If you would prefer to receive an e-news version of this publication rather than a printed copy, please let us know. Send an e-mail to info@vtworksforwomen.org with "E-news" in the subject line, and be sure to tell us your name and address so we can update our database. Thanks!

Step Up to Law Enforcement is featured in the June issue of *Police Chief Magazine*, a national publication by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, with a circulation of over 22,000. Read the article by going to www.vtworksforwomen.org and clicking on Programs for Women, then Step Up to Law Enforcement.



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Calendar of Events

**Vermont Women's Mentoring Program
Mentoring Orientations and Training
Sessions at Mercy Connections**
Ongoing – please call for details

**VWW's Modular Home Construction
Program Ribbon-cutting ceremony**
Middlebury, VT, *October 2009*

VWW's 11th Women Can Do Conference
Vermont Technical College
Randolph, VT, *October 15th, 2009*

**Senator Leahy's Women's Economic
Opportunity Conference**
Vermont Technical College
Randolph, VT, *October 17th, 2009*

"Women's Career Challenge Day"
Randolph Technical Career Center
Randolph, VT, *November 2009*

Transitional Jobs Program
Ongoing, year round

Rosie's Girls 2009 Reunions
February 2010

Step Up to Law Enforcement
Chittenden County, VT
March 2010

Step Up – Trades Training
Spring 2010

Northern Lights House Annual Celebration
Summer 2010

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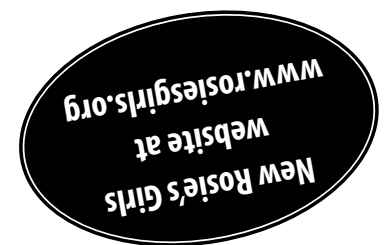
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