People with disabilities working together for dignity, independence and civil rights
1-800-639-1522
www.vcil.org

Photo by Jen Tedesco
This annual report is dedicated to the independent living leaders who we sadly lost this past year.

--Sarah Launderville

**Nancy Groff** was a kind, passionate, unique woman with a generous spirit and a lively presence. Nancy worked as the Program Director for the Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) in Brattleboro. She cared deeply about her work, which she continued to perform as she was being treated for cancer. She remained devoted to VIRS even after she was incapacitated by her disease, supporting and advocating a fundraising event for the Yolande Henry Community Fund.


**Pat Risser** was a wonderful leader and advocate. He paved the way in the psychiatric survivor movement and will be missed.

“If you have 100 people in a state hospital and find a way to get 50 of them out, I will celebrate with you for the release of the 50. But, the next day I will knock on your door asking about the difference between number 50 and number 51 and wondering why we couldn’t get just one more out. And, I will keep knocking until 99 are out because I’ll still be concerned about number 100. That’s my job, my role as an advocate.”

9/1952-6/2016

Artwork by Susan Sanderson
Dear Friends,

It is with great pride that I present VCIL’s 2016 Annual Report. Many thanks to Linda Meleady, VCIL’s Development Coordinator, for putting it together. Our year has been filled with serving the community to ensure that equal access and independence is a reality for more Vermonters.

In December, I met with some of the folks who were at VCIL when it began and in the early 1980s. We heard stories and shared some laughs. I heard from a few people how VCIL today has the same feel as it did back then — everyone coming together to work on the common goal of ensuring full inclusion, autonomy and dignity of folks with disabilities. You will see that represented on the pages of this report.

You will also read about some of the year’s celebrations, such as when we presented the dining for all award and when we held a picnic honoring peer-to-peer workers and all that they contribute to expanding options for people with disabilities.

We have highlighted longtime staff member Kevin Plant as well as individuals served by the programs we offer.

At the end of every annual report we thank our donors. People who contribute to VCIL financially allow us to serve more individuals, and I want to say a special thank you to these generous folks. Every time a donation comes into VCIL, my heart sings because I know that you are choosing to make a contribution to the lives of people with disabilities. I am grateful for your dedication to the independent living movement and helping individuals experience their full human potential.

I look forward to the upcoming year and all the good work we will do together.

In Solidarity,

Sarah Launderville
Executive Director

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Our Mission

Vermont Center for Independent Living

The mission of the Vermont Center for Independent Living is to empower Vermonters with disabilities, Deaf Vermonters, and others to tear down the physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers that keep us from realizing our full human potential.

Together, we will build communities to:

• Achieve our human and civil rights and equal access to services and opportunities.
• Have available ongoing resources and options for independent living.
• Realize our power to control and direct our own lives.

We join together to celebrate our diversity and the common goal for the full inclusion of all persons in the life of our communities.
WHO WE ARE

The Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL), a statewide nonprofit organization directed and staffed by people with disabilities, promotes the dignity, independence and civil rights of Vermonters with disabilities. Founded in 1979, VCIL was the first organization in the state to have a majority of board and staff with disabilities. In FY’16, 85 percent of our staff and board were people with significant disabilities. We understand what it takes to help others.

VCIL’s central office is in Montpelier with five branch offices in Bennington, Brattleboro, Burlington, Morrisville and Rutland.

INFORMATION, REFERRAL AND ASSISTANCE (IR&A)

VCIL’s Information, Referral and Assistance (IR&A) Coordinator provides quality referrals and information to people seeking assistance on a variety of issues. Our IR&A Coordinator is also responsible for the intake process of applications for the Peer Advocacy Counseling Program (PAC). In FY’16 VCIL provided 2,711 individuals with IR&A services.

PEER ADVOCACY COUNSELING PROGRAM

Peer Advocate Counselors (PACs) offer individual and group support, skills training, guidance for self-advocacy and resource development. PACs help peers define their individual interests and needs, develop and work toward personal goals, learn specific skills that enhance their ability to live independently and access available resources in their communities. In FY’16, VCIL served 360 individuals through the peer advocacy counseling program.

Deaf Independence Program

The Deaf Independence Program (DIP) provides individual and group skills training to people who are culturally Deaf throughout Vermont.
VT Interpreter Referral Service

The Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) provides American Sign Language (ASL)/spoken English interpreter referral services statewide for medical, legal, employment, educational, civil and recreational situations. VIRS also provides education and advocacy about Deaf people explaining to requesters their obligation to provide equal access to communication under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In FY’16 VIRS provided 6,422 hours of interpretation to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Vermont.

Youth Transition Program

- Workshop series on how to prepare for life after high school. With topics on confidence, communication, social media, self-advocacy and interviewing.
- Opportunity to work one-on-one with someone who has been there.
- Youth group support.

Your future is just ahead!

SUE WILLIAMS FREEDOM FUND

The Sue Williams Freedom Fund (SWFF) provides funding for services and equipment to help people with disabilities achieve or maintain independence in their own homes. In FY’16 SWFF spent $40,176.27 to help 40 people obtain services or equipment and leveraged an additional $57,214.07.

Vermont AgrAbility

The Vermont AgrAbility program provides education and assistance as well as peer support at no cost to farmers, their families and farm workers with disabilities who are engaged in production agriculture and want to continue farming. Farmers and their families eligible for Vermont AgrAbility services may have any type of acquired or traumatic disability—physical, cognitive or sensory.

MEALS ON WHEELS

VCIL’s Meals on Wheels Program (MOW) serves people with significant disabilities who are younger than 60 years of age. The program is statewide and serves people from all counties. It is coordinated from our main
In FY’16 VCIL contracted with 40 meal sites across the state to prepare and deliver one hot meal a day to program participants. A total of 56,136 meals were funded through this program during FY’16 to a total of 530 peers.

**Vermont Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program**

VCIL is the new home of the state funded VT Equipment Distribution Program (VTEDP) previously housed at the VT Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which closed its doors due to bankruptcy. The VTEDP helps income-eligible Vermonters who have trouble using a telephone and need adaptive equipment. This includes people who have physical disabilities and/or speech disabilities. The VTEDP will provide up to $750 of equipment for qualified individuals. The equipment is not owned by the individual who receives it but is a long-term loan.

**HOME ACCESS PROGRAM**

VCIL’s Home Access Program (HAP) provides home entry and bathroom accessibility modifications for low-income Vermonters with physical disabilities. The Home Access Program receives funding each year to help people with disabilities make accessibility modifications so they can continue to live independently and remain in their communities. In FY’16 the Home Access Program provided 38 households with ramps or entrance modifications, made 35 bathrooms accessible and provided one platform lift.

**COMMUNITY ACCESS**

VCIL’s Community Access Program works to improve access to buildings, services and programs. Program specialists provide technical assistance and training on the ADA regulations and standards to Vermont cities, towns, employers and businesses.

“We need to make every single thing accessible to every single person with a disability.”

-Stevie Wonder
During FY’16 twelve training events were held around the state with 532 participants. The community Access program responded to 176 ADA technical assistance requests from individuals, businesses and government agencies. Additionally the program supported municipal ADA committees in Barre, Montpelier, Burlington, Brattleboro and Rutland.

**WELLNESS WORKFORCE COALITION (WWC)**

The Wellness Workforce Coalition (WWC) is a statewide coalition of peer-run organizations supporting training and advocacy for Vermont’s peer workforce. The WWC’s mission is to create a statewide coalition of peer-run organizations that supports training and advocacy for Vermont’s peer workforce while preserving the autonomy, character, and contributions of each member organization.

“The irony is that we attempt to disown our difficult stories to appear more whole or more acceptable, But our wholeness -even our wholeheartedness- Actually depends on the integration of all of our experiences including the falls.”

-Dr. Brene’ Brown
Support our Efforts!

We’ve made donating even easier! Check out our new Network for Good site and become a monthly supporter. It’s easy to do and easier on the finances! Won’t you consider a monthly contribution? Of course you can still give a one-time donation by sending the enclosed envelope directly to VCIL or continue giving through your local United Way. And as always your donations are tax-deductible.

When shopping on Amazon, go to AmazonSmile and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to VCIL. Bookmark the link: http://smile.amazon.com/ch/02-0271000 and support us every time you shop!

GET INVOLVED

Groups & Events

VCIL’s regional offices offer a range of groups and/or activities based on the needs of that community. A schedule of meeting dates and locations can be found on our website or by contacting our I,R&A Department at: 1-800-639-1522.

Become a Member!

VCIL is a member-supported organization. We welcome all people who support our mission and have an interest in our programs and services. Membership is FREE and becoming a member affords you a copy of the Independent (VCIL’s news journal), quarterly electronic newsletter (via e-mail) and free loan of books from VCIL’s extensive library.

To join, please go to our website – www.vcil.org – or, if you received a hard copy of this report, complete the membership form on page 41 and return it in the donor envelope provided.

VCIL Website:

Check out the VCIL website at www.vcil.org. From that site you can gain access to our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages.

Facebook:

We invite you to join our ongoing discussions and post upcoming events. Check out our page at: www.facebook.com/VTCIL.

Twitter:

VCIL invites you to follow us on Twitter, which is updated at least weekly by Sarah Launderville.
PEER SUCCESS STORIES

Peer Advocate Counseling

Bidur Rai arrived in Vermont in the summer of 2015 from Nepal and the transition for the Bhutanese man was less than smooth. He felt trapped in their apartment in Burlington. At the time, Rai was unable to walk, or even stand, without assistance having never fully recovered from broken bones suffered in karate tournaments. He suffered swelling and numbness in his lower limbs and, eventually, lost all sensation in his legs. In Nepal, his family was around to help him, but in the U.S., Rai took care of his 18-month-old daughter while his family went to school or work.

In December 2015 Rai was put in touch with VCIL and met with PAC Kimberly Colville – who he cites as one of his sources of inspiration. Kimberly believes, “people can live the life they want, all it takes is hard work and accommodation from society.” Kimberly helped him navigate systems such as Special Services Transportation Agency and provided support at doctor appointments. After years of relying on family and friends to help him get around, Rai has started walking again with the help of a cane and is able to work part-time as a cashier at UVM.

In less than two years, Rai has gone from feeling hopeless about his life in the U.S. to wanting to help others the way he was helped. He now helps his neighbors fill out forms and feel that they face more challenges than he did even though they don't have physical disabilities. Knowing he's "doing something" for his community makes him feel good. Rai also keeps busy with various cultural activities. He's one of the coordinators of a dance troupe for Bhutanese youth, head of an informal group of the Rai and Subba families in Vermont and he hopes to start karate classes for his community. "Rai has a lot of drive," says Kimberly. "He's a person who wants to help people and bring positive change."

Story Credit: Kymelya Sari/Seven Days

Photo Credit: Oliver Parini/Seven Days
SWFF/AgrAbility

Gary Burleigh

Vermont AgrAbility recently worked with farmer Gary Burleigh to obtain a bale unroller so he could continue running his farm, including feeding hay to the cows. Gary had been pushing bales that weigh between 600 and 1,000 pounds up and down the length of his 120 foot-long barn to unbale them. Gary’s physical disability was making it increasingly difficult for him to perform this task in order to feed his cows.

VT AgrAbility worked with VocRehab and VCIL’s Sue Williams Freedom Fund, as well as with the farmer, to fund the mechanical bale unroller. Gary said, “The machine that the staff found has been a life-saver as it carries the bale and unrolls it automatically. My legs could not have continued to do this chore night and day. Thanks to the staff!!!”

C. Robert Smith

“My name is C. Robert Smith. I was born with a disability. I have a problem with my speech and balance, but I live by one saying ‘I don’t have a problem, but people who can’t deal with me, they have the problem.’ I was born into a farm family. My father and mother farmed with my grandfather and grandmother. They let me do things as far as my disabilities would let me do. I was driving a tractor by the age of six, and kept going from there. My jobs were feeding cows, hauling manure, harrowing, mowing hay, packing bunk silos and plowing snow. I have my driver’s license and I graduated from high school with honors.”

“In 2003 my father and mother sold our dairy farm in Orleans and moved to Westfield where we started up our goat dairy. Over the years the muscle in my legs has gotten real sore. I have a hard time getting around. For about a year I didn’t go to the barn. So that is why we got back in touch with AgrAbility. They helped us get in touch with people to help get my power wheelchair and put a lift on a bucket loader. The power wheelchair allowed me to go back to work. I feed hay to all the goats. I keep all of the water tubs up with a hose and I keep all
of the feed water swept up with a broom. By putting the lift on the bucket loader I could go back to putting the round bales into the barn. I help clean out the manure in the barn and plow snow in the winter. By working with AgrAbility and VCIL I was able to go back to work.”

**Meals on Wheels**

**Linda Bryant** “I’ve been on a long journey to become independent and to be at this point. I wish to climb further and feel worthy about myself. MOW’s allows me to be humble and to appreciate good, genuine help.

**Home Access Program**

**Bernarr M. Gibbs**

“I got head injury while working at a school. No Band-Aid so people did not believe I was hurt. My life changed that day, relationships with coworkers changed, working changed. Even family didn't believe I was hurt. Some people still don't believe. I felt people thought I was lazy. Not being able to work makes me feel useless at times. Like I don't contribute to my family support. Sometimes I don't remember what goes into a meal I'm making so it takes many trips to the store to have everything I need to cook. I get tired really quick so things take longer than they should. I forget in the middle, sit down, rest then try again. I don’t like how I am. It is hard to not support my family. People should look at people like people, not judge because I didn't plan on hitting my head that day so I could stay home.”

**Mike Baronas** received a bathroom modification and VCIL received this e-mail from him and his partner and caregiver: “I am more than pleased to tell you that the bathroom is finished and it is like a dream! Somebody pinch me! The amount of space for the shower is fantastic, the seat, the shower head, grab bars--really everything. We cannot thank VCIL enough for helping to make this modification possible. With VCIL’s help we were able to turn an unusually small bathroom into an ADA compliant one. This improvement allows Michael easy access, alleviating undo stress & frustration. VCIL was an answer to prayer! Thank you!”
Susan Peden

"The ramp installed will prevent more falls this winter and prolong the use of my knees! It allows me the use of a hand truck to move the trash bag and other bulky items without lifting them."

Donna Dalton “Without the help of this program I would not have been able to return home from rehab. My husband and I are on a fixed income that wasn’t able to cover the expenses of the projects needed for me to be able to safely return and live in my home. Without VCIL I don’t know where I’d be.”

VT Interpreter Referral Service

Ray and Linda Holmes

“Thank you so much for interpreting for Douglas’ Celebration of Life. We had several of his friends at both services and many of them are Deaf. We all appreciated your presence there, but really appreciated your gift to interpret! Thank you again.”

Anonymous

“I am dropping a note to thank you for all your help.

“The interpreter was so wonderful and my nephew really appreciated being able to join the ceremony.

“In the beginning it was sad with many tears, but, after everyone got beyond that and we started with stories it became lots of fun. Having many family out of state it turned into a combination family reunion. He would be so proud.

Again, thank you, thank you, thank you.”
EMPLOYEE STORY
Kevin Plant

Each year in the Annual Report we highlight one employee to learn more about their experience with disability and how they came to VCIL. This year we have the pleasure of introducing you to Kevin Plant.

“I’m the oldest of five siblings born and raised in Chittenden County. Our family was middle class and somewhat religious. I married my high school sweetheart at the age of 26 and had two children, a son and daughter, by the age of 30. Then, something occurred that would change my life forever. My wife was devastated by some underhanded actions of her boss where she worked, causing her to resign and experience a breakdown. I soon found myself to be the only source of income with two children, a mortgage and all the bills that come with having a young family. I was increasingly turning to alcohol to relieve the stress I was under. I didn’t want to live like that. To make matters worse, the company I was working for began downsizing and I was soon laid off.

“I began going to AA meetings as I grew increasingly miserable. I moved out of our home after becoming separated from my wife and eventually we were divorced. I moved into an apartment in Burlington while continuing to attend meetings. The fellowship I found in the rooms of AA was no doubt a lifesaver for me as I missed my kids and my ex-wife as well.

“During my first year in Burlington I came down with the flu, or at least I thought it was the flu. After several weeks of feeling horrible, my doctor told me she was sure I had developed fibromyalgia and that I would have to basically learn to live with it. After many more months I asked for further testing because I was growing shorter of breath as time went by. It was then that I first applied for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) but it would take a total of four denials from them and hiring an attorney before receiving SSDI. The Social Security Administration didn’t really recognize fibromyalgia as a disability back then, but as it turned out, that wasn’t my disability after all.

“I went to the hospital for a series of X-rays which showed that the lymph nodes in my lungs had grown to lemon-size and some of
them needed to be removed. At first the oncologist thought I had lymphatic cancer, but after doing a biopsy on my lymph nodes, the doctors told me I had pulmonary sarcoidosis. Now, my breathing was severely affected and the pain in my body was nearly unbearable.

“Within months of receiving SSDI and with my disability increasingly under control, I found a new apartment. I was still attending AA meetings as often as I felt up to it, but that wasn’t enough; I felt that I needed to become a productive participant in society once again.

“That’s when I called VCIL. I asked if someone could work with me toward finding a part-time job. Soon after, Paul Cook, a peer advocate counselor, visited me at my apartment. He helped me to get through much of the depression I was feeling, due to having been removed from the workplace for several years. He helped me to get my resume updated and assisted me with job searching.

“Not long after, one of the jobs I would be interviewing for was at VCIL itself. The job was as an assistant to Sue Toolan, a longtime VCIL employee based in Montpelier. I didn’t get the job, however, a fresh part-time position was opening up in the Burlington office as an assistant to the Sue Williams Freedom Fund administrator, Kim McCarty. I interviewed for the job and was asked to come back for a second interview. A couple of weeks later I was overjoyed at the news that I had gotten the position.

“That was in December, 2006. Currently I’m working in the Burlington office as a part-time assistant to our IT/database coordinator, Peter Johnke. I often find myself thinking back to that time in my life when getting out of bed in the morning was very difficult. I’ll always be grateful to Paul Cook for helping me find the strength to reenter the work force. I’m equally grateful to the folks who hired me: then-Executive Director Deborah Lisi-Baker; then-Deputy Director Janet Dermody; the HAP/SWFF coordinator at the time, Sarah Launderville; and the HAP/SWFF supervisor, Kim McCarty. I look forward to what unfolds during the years to come.”
ABOUT OUR PEERS

GENDER

Female............. 1137
Male ................. 862
Unknown ............ 25

OUR DISABILITIES

Cognitive..................... 57
Hearing...................... 124
Mental Emotional .......... 94
Multiple..................... 415
Physical..................... 831
Vision ....................... 16
*Unknown ................... 487

INDIVIDUALS SERVED
BY COUNTY

Addison ............... 44
Bennington .......... 255
Caledonia .......... 126
Chittenden ........ 318
Essex ................. 35
Franklin ............ 112
Grand Isle .......... 13
Lamoille ............. 88
Orange ................ 69
Orleans ............ 113
Rutland ............. 202
Washington ...... 189
Windham .......... 195
Windsor ........... 126
Out of State or unknown.... 139

AGES OF OUR PEERS

Under 6 years ....... 1
Ages 6-17 ............. 4
Ages 18-34 ........... 111
Ages 35-64 .......... 1074
65 and over .......... 345
*Unknown ............. 489

*Much of the data represented is from IR&A calls where people do not always disclose their age or type of disability
SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Information, Referral & Assistance
2,711 peers and organizations

Home Access Program
35 bathroom modifications, 36 ramps, and two entrances and one lift

Peer Advocacy Counseling
360 peers served

Meals on Wheels
697 peers and 58,260 meals!

Sue Williams Freedom Fund
40 peers received assistive technology totaling $40,176.27

VT Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (VT EDP)
23 Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing peers received adaptive telephone equipment
FY’16 HIGHLIGHTS

Farmer Veteran Coalition

In November, the Vermont AgrAbility project officially became one of four states to receive Farmer Veteran Coalition state chapter status and papers were signed right here at VCIL. The photo shows the board of directors of the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Vermont signing the chartering papers. Members include Chairman Jon Turner (seated), Treasurer Chris O'Keefe (left), Kenny Smith and Frank Hill.

AgrAbility Grant

In December VCIL made some progress in funding our non-funded state project – AgrAbility thanks to the help of Community National Bank in Morrisville. Pictured is Tom Younkman, AgrAbility Specialist, receiving a very nice grant from Heather Bradley of the Community National Bank in appreciation for all the work AgrAbility has been doing in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

VSECU Grant

In January, VCIL applied for funds through VSECU’s We Care 2 program which allows the members of the credit union to have a say in how the $20,000 available is distributed. VCIL was one of 33 applications received for consideration and one of the five finalists selected by the Board of Directors Giving Committee. VSECU members then had the opportunity to cast a vote for their favorite non-profit organization based on demonstrated impact and community support. Funds were then distributed based on the percentage of votes each charity received. VCIL received the second highest number of votes and was awarded $3,886! Thank you to everyone who voted for VCIL!

International Visitors

In April, VCIL hosted an international group after being contacted by the manager of Global Engagement at the Vermont Council of World Affairs. The group, who were from all over the world, were excited to meet with our staff and discuss our work with Vermonters with disabilities. The group was in the U.S. to observe our country’s ongoing efforts to uphold and
enforce the rights of persons with disabilities (PWD). While here they had the opportunity to discuss design and construction, including architecture, physical space, training, and technologies, to assist individuals to overcome barriers that prevent full participation in community life. They were interested in our country’s laws related to disability rights and how to enforce them along with examining our health, educational and social support services for people with disabilities.

**Legislators Pass S.66**

In May, Governor Shumlin signed into law an act related to Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing. The Vermont Deaf Community including VCIL’s Missy Boothroyd joined the nationwide effort to raise awareness and increase political pressure to address the inequality and injustice that Deaf (Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened) people continue to face. It was the first time community activists, advocates and allies from across the state joined other groups across the nation to celebrate their differences and recognize all the hard work that had been done over the last two years to successfully pass Senate Bill 66.

Upon the closure of the Austine School and the Vermont Center for the Deaf, agencies serving the Deaf community in Vermont were inadequate and nationwide were also severely underfunded. This bill will establish a Public Council of 16 members from Vermont of which nine will be Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing. This council will begin to assess the services and resources and opportunities that parallel the Deaf Grassroots Movement (DGM). The National Platform of DGM is to address the three major issues of communication access, education and employment.

**HAP receives USDA Grant Award**

Ted Brady, State Director of the USDA, announced at a press conference at VCIL in September that VCIL and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) will be receiving one of seven USDA Rural Development Housing Preservation Grants. The money included $26,021.00 for VCIL to support accessibility modifications and home repairs for Vermonters with physical disabilities. Ted stated, “The Housing Preservation Grant Program allows Rural Development to work hand-in-hand with local housing organizations to support Vermont and New Hampshire residents preserve and enhance the safety and quality of their homes.”
USDA Honors PAC Tyler Sweeten

In September, VCIL’s Tyler Sweeten was honored by the USDA with their prestigious Gold Star Partner Award. Tyler, who has firsthand experience living with a disability works tirelessly to ensure that peers can maintain their homes and continue to live independently with their communities.

Ted Brady, USDA Rural Development Vermont and New Hampshire State Director, presented the award. He noted that USDA Rural Development has long given out Gold Star awards internally, but in recent years, staff members started nominating people outside the organization. Still the awards are not handed out often. “I like to think they are a thing of honor and they’re also very organic,” Brady said.

“I’ve never been nominated for anything. This is awesome,” said Tyler. She also expressed gratitude for getting to help people she meets and for the people she works with at partner organizations. “You guys are all rock stars. This is just a testament to all of the awesome work that we do.”

“Joe am so proud of Tyler. She is an amazing advocate and I cannot think of a more deserving person to receive this honor. Tyler goes above and beyond every day and uses her experiences to help others in the community gain independence.” said Sarah Launderville, Executive Director of VCIL.

Youth Transition

Over the past year, in partnership with VocRehab Vermont, the youth transition team has continued to offer skill training workshops in high schools throughout Vermont. Workshop skills include communication skills, preparing for college and job interviews, building confidence and self-advocacy skills and social media connection to employment. In addition, we have put together a series of videos on the VCIL YouTube page of young people with disabilities talking about life and transitions. Check it out and please share with others. Young people ages twenty-six and under can join the closed Facebook group “VCIL Youth Caucus” for ongoing conversations on disability rights in Vermont.
FY’16 Events/Activities

Farm Show

Vermont AgrAbility was part of the Vermont Farm Show in January at the Expo Center in Essex Junction. The show was attended by approximately 5,000 people. The VT AgrAbility booth was a joint effort with the Vermont Health Task Force where heart rate and glucosamine testing was offered, as was a self-examination sun damage machine people use to examine the damage done to their face by the sun.

Disability Awareness Day

The annual event took place on March 23rd at the VT State House. Over 300 people participated in the day’s activities, including those with disabilities, family members, advocates, members of the administration and many allies. Over 60 distinct organization were represented and people had the opportunity to interact with legislators and take part in legislative proceedings and events arranged at the State House for the day. We heard from the governor, attended great workshops and even held a press conference! In the evening we gathered for food, music, keynote speeches and a panel discussion – plus a good bit of socializing!

The theme of Disability Awareness Day was “Let’s Get to work!” focusing the day on the employment of people with disabilities. The keynote speakers were Bryon MacDonald and Justin Harford, co-chairs of the National Council on Independent Living’s Employment-Social Security Subcommittee. They shared their work to bring the CareerACCESS project to fruition.

CareerACCESS is a community-driven proposed program to reform the current Social Security Administration’s Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI) rules to that young adults with disabilities can work and achieve their full potential without risking losing their disability benefits.

2nd Annual Comedy Night

In March at the Fresh Tracks Farm and Vineyard, VCIL hosted our 2nd Annual comedy night fundraiser.
Comedian Christine Parker returned as the evening’s MC and everyone from the previous year was on board for a repeat performance. This year Taylor Scribner was also added to the lineup that included: Bitsy Biron, Kathleen Kanz, Regi B and the Kamikaze Comedians (Matt Saltus, Mourning Fox, Heather Caldera and Chris Jarvis). All participants generously donated their time (again!) helping us to offset costs and the sold out show was a great success.

As soon as we have a date for this year’s Comedy Night we will put it on our Facebook page and our website. If you haven’t made it to the last two, stay tuned for the **third annual show** coming up this spring.

**Bruce & Hobbes**

In April, VCIL and students from the New School were joined by Bruce Zeman, Jr., Tami Crupi Zeman and Hobbes for a reading of their new book “Hobbes Goes Home” and a follow-up talk about bullying. Hobbes was abused by his former owner and the book is about his rescue and recovery which the kids really seemed to be able to relate to. Bruce & Hobbes graciously stayed after the event to sign books and talk to participants.

**VIRS Annual Fundraiser**

The 11th Annual Yolande Henry Community Fund Fundraiser was held on April 23rd in Bethel. The Yolande Henry Community Fund pays for sign language interpreters for weddings, funerals and family gatherings in Vermont which are not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), thus sparing the families considerable interpreter expenses for these important life events and assuring that Deaf loved ones are able to attend. The Community Fund is funded entirely by this annual fundraiser and by individual contributions.

This year’s performer was Crom Saunders who has been described as being in constant motion.
Whether he is teaching, presenting, performing, and everything in between. He currently holds a MA in Creative Writing. Crom has worked for theater in almost every position possible backstage and on stage, in addition to lecturing on a wide variety of topics. He delighted the audience this year with his one-man show "Cromania!" bringing multiple characters to life through storytelling, pantomime, and improvisation.

**People’s Convention**

On May 1st, VCIL partnered members of the Human Rights Council on a great event called the People’s Convention. Over 400 people gathered at Montpelier High School for the event and discussed how to build a movement for people and the planet with the power to change what’s politically possible in Vermont. Folks from both our Montpelier and Bennington office helped bring the voice of disability to the convention.

“Me Before You” Demonstration

VCIL staff and friends lined up outside the Majestic 10 movie theater in Williston on June 3rd to call attention and talk to movie-goers about ableism and disability culture in response to the release of the film “Me Before You.”

VCIL’s Nate Besio, a wheelchair user himself, said, “I think it just enforces a stereotype that people with disabilities are unhappy and miserable, and that it’s better to die.” Like the main character in “Me Before You,” Nate suffered a spinal cord injury, however, unlike the dashing movie hero, who – spoiler alert – opts to kill himself rather than go on, Besio is loving life. “You have to say to yourself, ‘You know, I can do things I’ve always wanted to do.’ The question is how to do it?” Besio says. “And how you have to do it becomes a little bit more complicated—but I never stopped having those goals.”

VCIL’s Ericka Reil (right) with Shela Linton organizer from the VT Workers’ Center were on the Environmental Justice Panel talking about how disability is effected by environmental changes.
Scott Goyette, a longtime VCIL supporter, said, “I really thought that they missed an opportunity to portray what the reality of it is being in this situation.” Goyette has a job, skis, scuba dives, and coaches a soccer team. And he says he’s incredibly thankful for the life he’s living. He added that the impact of disability stereotypes is far more detrimental than any of the physical hurdles he has to clear every day.

“If people limit the world that they think you live in, it can have an impact on what your own possibilities are.”
- Scott Goyette

NCIL Conference
Every year, Sarah Launderville makes the trek to Washington, D.C. for the National Council on Independent Living Annual Conference. This year, she was delighted to have two other staff members also attend the conference: Finance and Operations Officer Michelle Grubb and Patricia Tedesco, Home Access Program Coordinator. Michelle returned and shared her thoughts and impressions about attending her first-ever NCIL conference.

“I happily accepted the opportunity to go to this year’s NCIL Conference in D.C. and then all sorts of questions started swirling through my head. What would it be like to be part of a civil rights march to Capitol Hill? How would it feel to be part of a gathering of over 700 People in the disability rights movement from all over the country? Looking back, I can say that it was an amazing and powerful experience that I hope everyone get to be a part of at some point in their lives.

“This year’s theme was ‘Solidarity: Everybody In’. Conference leaders did a wonderful job of weaving ‘everybody in’ by brining discussion on the commonalities regarding the ‘fight for rights’ among the disability, race and LGBTQ communities and why we should support each other. There was representation from the international community, most notably a group from Japan. We all mourned the loss of our Japanese brothers and sisters in Japan who were brutally murdered while we were at the conference that week. There were people from all over the country who shared their stories, insights and energy.
“It was wonderful to see VCIL leader Sarah Launderville’s role on the national stage. She gave a powerful speech in front of Capitol Hill. One of my highlights was seeing her advocate at the Vermont congressional delegation offices for Peter Welch, Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders. The top three legislative priorities were as follows:

- Disability Integration Act in which people with disabilities would have a federally protected right to their choice of housing, services and supports.
- Stopping the ADA notification bills which would add extended notification periods and barriers to filing complaints under the ADA.
- Thanking the Vermont delegation for approving an increase in funding for CIL’s for this coming year but asking them to consider funding the $200 million additional funding for next year, including CareerACCESS pilot program.

“The experience that was most powerful for me was the march. It was hot and humid. It was grueling. It was loud. It was raw. It is necessary. It is empowering. It is the way we are seen and heard. It is “Solidarity: Everybody In.”

ADA Celebrations
Lake Shaftsbury State Park

In honor of the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, our Bennington and Brattleboro staff once again teamed up with the Bart J. Ruggiere Adaptive Sports Center to host a day of inclusive kayaking and a picnic lunch. There was also an aquatic wheelchair available for accessibility to swimming. Past and present VCIL peers, their families and caregivers were invited, free! VCIL provided hot dogs and hamburgers, and guests were encouraged to bring dishes, snacks or drinks to share. It was great that we were able to provide an accessible bus for folks to get to and from the park.

Instructors from the Bart Adaptive Sports Center were on hand to help with the kayaking. The mission of the center is to provide people with disabilities and their families the opportunity to enjoy outdoor sports.
Burlington, Brattleboro and Montpelier ADA Celebrations

This year our Burlington, Brattleboro and Montpelier offices hosted a movie day/open house in celebration of the ADA’s 26th anniversary. In Montpelier folks watched “The Road Within” and “Temple Grandin,” and our Burlington office enjoyed “On a Roll.” Popcorn and refreshments were enjoyed by all. Brattleboro staff and guests enjoyed refreshments and socializing.

WWC Peer Worker Celebration

In August, the WWC held a peer worker celebration at Branbury State Park. It included laughter yoga, swimming, coloring, good food, good conversations and a hearty game of Pictionary.

Peer support means sharing the power of your lived experience with others to achieve mutual goals, assess options and discover new ways of thinking and doing. It means creating a connection between two people that does not place one in the role of the helper and the other in the role of “helpee.” When we do this, both parties benefit, and both learn from the process.

Peer supporters offer a perspective that is as powerful as it is unique. That’s because peer supporters understand that all experiences, including traumatic ones, impact how we see the world and how we respond to it. Most importantly, peer support works! It’s extremely flexible, and can be used either as an alternative or in addition to clinical psychiatric and substance abuse services. And it offers hope for a journey to well-being for people while managing complex mental health and recovery pathways.
Sarah Launderville said, “We felt it was important to take a moment and celebrate the important work of peer-to-peer workers in Vermont who are a vital part of our mental health and recovery programs.”

**Dining for All Award**

Got access? Mary Alice Proffitt, owner of Montpelier’s Down Home Kitchen, sure does.

That’s why VCIL recognized her with the Rosemary J. Miller Dining for All Award. The award was handed out at the restaurant in September with VCIL board and staff members and of course Rosemary Miller. Mary Alice had done her homework on Rosie’s favorite confection, serving a delicious chocolate Coca-Cola cake that Rosie hopes will become a regular menu item.

This year’s award offered VCIL an opportunity to celebrate two passionate advocates for good food and accessibility. VCIL Executive Director Sarah Launderville said, “With this award we honor Rosemary Miller, who was on the front lines of VCIL for over 30 years, and her love of our community and good food. When Mary Alice came to town, she put her heart and soul into making sure this restaurant is accessible to all. She could easily have decided to ask for a variance or abatement from the state citing the difficulty of the space, but her character and values shined through when she made the modifications. She took a space that had never been accessible to someone with a physical disability and offered opportunity. We are honored to give her this award.”

Rosie said she was surprised, prior to Down Home’s opening, to see a ramp being added to a building in Montpelier’s historic downtown. “I was impressed that the owner had the desire and the courage to fight for everyone to be able to enter the building.” Rosie said, “Mary Alice greets everyone like an old friend and is very inclusive of her customers.”

In addition to the delicious home-style cooking and baking, there are many things to like about Down Home Kitchen, including the fact that the bathroom and entrance are accessible. But while the physical modifications that Mary Alice made to the building are admirable, it is the warm and inviting atmosphere that makes Down Home Kitchen so special. The staff is friendly and thoughtful; for example they will gladly accommodate by reading the menu aloud for customers who are blind.

In presenting this award to Mary Alice, Sarah said, “Thank you for
your vision, your commitment to this community and for going out of your way to ensure that all in this community can have access and enjoy the space you created.”

The only thing that made the celebration incomplete was that Kim and Ash Brittenham were not there. Kim, a former employee of VCIL and her son Ash who has Duchenne’s muscular dystrophy were very helpful to Mary Alice in assuring the space was accessible since Ash is a wheelchair user.

Mary Alice held a soft opening as a farewell party to Ash and Kim who moved to North Carolina where the winters are less harsh. Ash did send this message for Rosie: “I hope you're appreciating this good access to good food today -- Mary Alice sure has succeeded on both! Mom and I send our love to you BOTH.”

Mary Alice was touched and said she shed some serious tears upon receiving the ward.

If you would like to nominate a Vermont restaurant for next year’s Rosemary J. Miller Dining for All Award, email smonte@vcil.org or call 1-800-639-1522.

TBI Support Group

Joe Healy, a member of the support group, has just published a book on his experiences surviving a traumatic brain injury. Above is a picture of Joe (left) and Tom Younkman with Joe’s handbook. Joe presented each member of the support group with a signed copy for their personal collection.

Radio Show-College Steps

Charlie Murphy in our Bennington office continues to host the weekly “Meet Your Neighbor” radio show on Bennington’s community radio station, WBTN AM 1370 on Fridays at 1:00. Recently he interviewed Dawn Brownlow, College Steps participant and Andrew Fontana, her student mentor, of the College Steps program at Southern Vermont College about their experience and the importance of the program. College Steps offers students with a disability a student mentor to be their guide as the student gets familiar with college life.
Funky Bike Day

The Second Annual Funky Adaptive Bike Day held in Bennington was a huge success! There was a steady flow of people trying bikes all day with more children attending this year. Last year attendance seemed to be an even split between people with disabilities and avid sporty-cyclist types who were interested in new technology; this year it was more heavily attended by folks with disabilities looking for options. Lynn Mazza, PAC in Bennington said, “Again this year, it was great to see the looks on people’s faces as they pulled away looking scared and uncertain on this strange bike. They would go up around the parking lot and get the hang of it, by the time they came around again, back into view from where I was sitting, the looks of pure glee and joy were priceless!” She added, “Events like this make me extra grateful to be part of the VCIL family! Joe, Anna and Don from the Bart Center for Adaptive Sports were great working with people and getting them comfortable on the bikes. Thank you!”

Contractor Training

Every year, VCIL’s Home Access Program (HAP) holds a contractor training in two different parts of the state. Last March, trainings were held in Brattleboro and Montpelier and were open to all interested contractors. Trainings cover how to bid these particular projects, how to follow the VCIL Scope and how to work with people who have disabilities, among other topics. VCIL is always looking for additional contractors who are not familiar with our organization and who want work doing what we do. If you or someone you know is interested in these trainings they are coming up in early March. Call VCIL at 1-800-639-1522 or look for details on our website: www.vcil.org

Nonprofit Information Fair

The Rutland VCIL office, along with the local advocacy group Disabled Access & Advocacy of the Rutland Area (DAARA), organized a non-profit information fair on July 26 at the Asa Bloomer Building in Rutland. Local organizations that provide services to people with disabilities, including seniors, participated in this event in recognition of the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
NCIL Board Meeting
VCIL’s Sarah Launderville met with Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights and Charlie B. Kellett, U.S. State Department while in Washington, D.C.

Bennington ADA Celebration
VCIL’s Jessie Butterfield (who is blind and uses a wheelchair), gets ready to try out kayaking at the Bennington ADA celebration with BARTS Adaptive Sports. Jessie said, “I had a great time, and would consider doing it again.”

WWC Celebration
VCIL’s Sue Booth, Linda Meleady, Chanda Beun and volunteer Shannon Reynolds (front) enjoy the WWC celebration at Lake Dunmore.

NCIL
Kim and Ash Brittenham with Sarah Launderville at the NCIL photo booth.

VSECU Grant
VCIL employees celebrate the VSECU Grant with a group photo.

Halloween Party in Brattleboro

International Visitors
Our international visitors brave the cold for a photo opportunity outside VCIL.
Meet & Greet

Mary Margaret Moore (L), Sarah Launderville (R) attended a meet and greet with Senator Elizabeth Warren. (They did not coordinate their outfits ahead of time.) 😊

Conference Room Makeover

One of our first visitors after the “makeover” had this to say about our conference room: “Thank you all for everything you did today. Today’s celebration was especially enjoyable because of VCIL’s warm atmosphere.”

Down Home

Disability Awareness Day

Paralympics

Alicia Dana, former VCIL PAC, took home a silver medal at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio making her the first Vermonter to medal at the Paralympics! Here she is at a 2015 competition in Nottwil, Switzerland with her daughter Willa.
That’s our own HAP Specialist Susan Britto helping to build one of our peer’s ramps.

The Pokémon craze wasn’t lost on us here at VCIL. Above is Alaina Clements “catching” one. Our Montpelier window was decorated with a Pokémon “go ball” and some highlights of our work.

“The Witches of Admin”... and still VCIL was “nominated” in the Best of the Best for “nonprofit” and “best place to work” in the Times Argus online. Pretty cool!

Missy Boothroyd VCIL PAC and DIP Coordinator, with peer Shelley Bevins at the Brattleboro Holiday Open House.

Charlie Brashear takes a spin on one of the “Funky Bikes.”

ADA Celebration at Shaftsbury Lake.

Down Home’s Mary Alice Proffitt and Sarah cutting into the “Coca Cola Chocolate Cake.” Mmm mmm good!
BOARDS of DIRECTORS

Martha “Marty” Roberts, President
Samuel E. Liss, Vice President
Ed Paquin, Treasurer
John Pierce, Secretary
Henry Demar, At-Large Member
Maureen Mayo
Irving Payne
Bryan Pritchard
Gary Snyder
Stuart Soboleski

STAFF

Sarah Launderville, Exec. Director

Financial Services
Michelle Grubb, Finance & Operations Officer

Admin. & Support Services
Chanda Beun, Receptionist, MOW Specialist
Sue Booth, Bus. Office Coord.
Patrick Fitzgerald, Outcome & Evaluations Specialist/Receptionist
Stefanie Monte, Executive Ass’t.

Information, Referral & Assistance (IR&A)
Jacob Lavigne, I,R&A

Development / Fundraising
Linda Meleady, Development Coord.

VT Interpreter Referral Service
Nancy Groff, Program Coordinator
Bridget McBride, Program Spec.

Community Access
Mike Charron, Civil Rights Specialist

Peer Advocacy Counseling (PAC) and Deaf Services
Colleen Arcodia, PAC – Bennington
Nate Besio, PAC – Burlington
Missy Boothroyd, Deaf Independence Program Coord. - Brattleboro
Jessie Butterfield, PAC – Bennington
Peter Johnke, Database Coord.
Lynn Mazza, PAC - Bennington
Charlie Murphy, PAC - Bennington
Kevin Plant, Database Assistant
Glenn Reed, PAC – Rutland
Ericka Reil, PAC Coord.-Montpelier
Franklin Shiner, Advocacy Specialist
Candace Stoumen, PAC - Brattleboro
Tyler Sweeten, PAC Coord.-Montpelier
Kimberly Colville, PAC - Burlington
Tom Younkman, PAC, AgrAbility Specialist

Direct Service Programs
Susan Britto, Home Access Program Specialist
Alaina Clements, Sue Williams Freedom Fund Specialist
Karin Nissen, Meals on Wheels Coord.
Patricia Tedesco, Home Access Prog. & Sue Williams Freedom Fund Coord.

VT Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program
Alaina Clements, Coordinator

Wellness Workforce Coalition
Julie Brisson, Coordinator
ABOUT OUR FUNDING

Most of VCIL’s funding comes from a variety of federal, state and local sources. VCIL’s primary funding comes from the U.S. Department of Education.

The Department of Education funding helps us provide Peer Advocacy Counseling, skills training services, community advocacy activities, and information, referral and assistance services.

In FY’16 VCIL received funding from several federal and state agencies and 130 cities and towns, all of whom are valuable partners. We thank all of the individuals, businesses, contractors, community organizations and partners that help keep our programs active and successful.

Most importantly we thank the volunteers and individual donors who help bring VCIL’s mission of dignity, independence and civil rights to every community in Vermont. Your active participation in this movement and your continued support is what makes our work possible.
## VERMONT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

### STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

**FOR THE YEARS ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2016 AND 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Restricted cash – building reserve</td>
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<td>Investments</td>
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<td><strong>CURRENT LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current portion of mortgage note payable</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LONG-TERM LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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### CHANGE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

#### REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Federal and State Grants</td>
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<td><strong>Net assets released from restrictions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>35,745</strong></td>
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**TOTAL REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT**

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<th>2015</th>
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<td></td>
<td>$ 2,756,514</td>
<td>$ 2,777,194</td>
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#### EXPENSES

**Program Services:**

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<td>Advocacy</td>
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<td>Other Programs</td>
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**Support Services:**

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**TOTAL EXPENSES**

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#### CHANGE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

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#### BEGINNING UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

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#### ENDING UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

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<td></td>
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<td>$ 744,116</td>
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#### CHANGE IN TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

**SUPPORT AND REVENUE**

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<td><em>(35,745)</em></td>
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**CHANGE IN TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS**

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#### BEGINNING TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

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<td></td>
<td>15,242</td>
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#### ENDING TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

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<th>2015</th>
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<td></td>
<td>$ 8,160</td>
<td>$ 15,242</td>
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**TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS**

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<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$ 35,124</td>
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THANK YOU TO OUR GRANTORS

Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)
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VCIL wishes to extend our sincere appreciation to all of our project partners that we have worked with throughout the years. Without these valued relationships our mission would not be possible.

**These lists reflect Individual, Business, Organization and Grantor contributions and/or partnerships for FY’16. Our deepest apology to any agency, organization or individual we may have inadvertently omitted.**
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“As one person I cannot change the world, But I can change the world of one person.”

-Paul Shane Spear
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Thank you!

To the many individuals who supported our Red Sox Raffle. Stay tuned this summer for your chance to win 2 tickets and accessible bus transportation to a Red Sox game.
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“The work of volunteers impacts on all our lives, Even if we are not aware of it.”
- Anthony Worrall-Thompson

**Our deepest apology to any individuals or organizations we may have omitted.**
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To join, please go to our website - www.vcil.org - or, complete the below membership form, and send it to VCIL in the enclosed envelope.

For more information call: 1-800-639-1522

I believe in equal rights for people with disabilities! I want to be a member of VCIL.

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