



# groundworks

## COLLABORATIVE

2016 Report | Laying the Groundwork



## thank you!

Many thanks to all of our donors for your generous support of Groundworks Collaborative. Your contributions and dedication to our neighbors in need are so very appreciated. We welcome you to come for a tour, meet our staff, and see your contributions at work.

## dear friends,

As we reflect on nearly two years since the creation of Groundworks Collaborative (from the merger of the Brattleboro Area Drop-In Center with Morningside Shelter), we are pleased to report that we've already begun to see the kind of increased impact the merger was intended to generate for our community. While the process of coming together has brought its own challenges, we affirm that we picked the right time to merge the two organizations into a single point-of-entry for our neighbors struggling to meet their basic needs. This report focuses on the work YOU have helped us achieve so far as Groundworks Collaborative.



In our first year as Groundworks, we:

- Provided emergency food assistance to 3,683 individuals (3,042 adults and 641 children across 672 households);
- Provided emergency shelter to 303 individuals (275 adults and 28 children);
- Provided supportive services (through our Case Management and Representative Payee programs) to over 200 individuals; and
- Supported 25 households (33 adults and 11 children) in securing housing. Since the start of our current fiscal year (July 1, 2016), we've already housed another 30 households, with 41 adults and 17 children among them.

We're extremely proud of the work our committed staff have put in to expand access to food, provide shelter, and work with clients to secure housing. These accomplishments are the direct result of investment in the organization and the people we serve. You may think a merger is about reducing staff and expenses. While we have created efficiencies by coming together, our goal was to do a better job meeting the need, which has meant expanding staff to meet a greater demand for our services. In turn, we need supporters like you now more than ever to help us continue this level of impact.

Our work, while challenging, is filled with stories of our neighbors thriving, which keeps us celebrating great accomplishments. Our work and mission help to keep our community vibrant and a great place to live for all who call our region home. This report highlights the groundwork we continue to shape with staff, clients, and volunteers, as we celebrate our successes together with you. Thank you for your support in making it all happen.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Farnum".

Chad Farnum, Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Davis".

Josh Davis, Executive Director

## housing support case management team

Heather Francisco, Heather Burrows, Michele Wright, and Effie Mayhew make up Groundworks' Housing Support Case Management team.

Supporting clients to find and maintain stable housing through case management was a programmatic focus of both Morningside Shelter and the Brattleboro Area Drop-In Center. The natural crossover has placed our Housing Support Case Management team at the forefront of the merger process. Together, this team has demonstrated great leadership—improving services and finding stable housing for an unprecedented number of families and individuals, while laying the important groundwork to help remove barriers to housing for our neighbors in need.

Our Case Managers work with over 100 area households across a broad spectrum of housing need—from outreach on the street or in one of our shelters, to ongoing support once our clients are in housing. With the added case management capacity we have achieved since the merger, our Case Management team has deepened relationships and built increasing levels of trust with many chronically homeless individuals, several of whom had been consistently staying at the Seasonal Overflow Shelter each year. Many of these individuals had unique needs that they did not know could be met with available housing options. With each success achieved, this team has demonstrated that housing is possible for everyone. In building this level of trust with clients, we have yet to discover anyone who does not want safe, stable housing. Rather, we have found that many people are able to be successful in housing when given options and supportive services that meet their needs.

This trust and relationship building extends to landlords, and is critical to making housing available to our clients. We're facing a 0.5% vacancy rate on affordable housing units in Windham County (Vermont Housing Needs Assessment)—a healthy rental market would have a 4–6% vacancy rate. The incredibly low vacancy rate, coupled with the current freeze on all federally funded housing vouchers, has contributed to longer lengths-of-stay in our shelters and threatens our ability to find affordable housing options for as many people in the coming year. We applaud the dedication of this team in housing an unparalleled number of families and individuals, despite incredible obstacles as they walk the unique path to housing with each client.



Over the last two years, Groundworks' Housing Support Case Management team has supported an unprecedented number of families and individuals in securing housing.





After a short stay at Groundworks Shelter, Jermaine and Kobe are now thriving in their own apartment.

## jermaine & kobe

When Jermaine and his five-year-old son Kobe arrived at Groundworks Shelter in March 2016 they had been staying with various friends and family for several months. Jermaine is a single father; devoted to his son and motivated to get his family settled and stable. Kobe is an adorable little boy who immediately won the hearts of residents and staff at the Shelter.

It was clear from the beginning that they would be great candidates for the new Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program Groundworks had just kicked off with the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA). Rapid Re-Housing is an innovative way to reduce the length of time a family spends without housing, as studies have shown that reducing this time in shelters leads to stronger, more sustainable outcomes once the family has housing.

Right away Jermaine worked with the Shelter's Case Manager, Cindy, to apply for a RRH voucher. The VSHA was able to turn the application around within an unprecedented 24 hours. Jermaine found an apartment within three months of arriving at the Shelter. Prior to RRH, the length-of-stay for families was anywhere from six to twelve months.

Now that they're housed, Jermaine and Kobe have settled in well. Kobe is enjoying school, and Jermaine (who has a degree in IT) is working part-time for the State of Vermont in Economic Services. They were able to save enough money to buy a car, which has made it much easier to meet their needs. He continues to work with a Groundworks Case Manager to achieve long-term financial stability; with goals to find full-time employment and remain stably housed in Brattleboro.

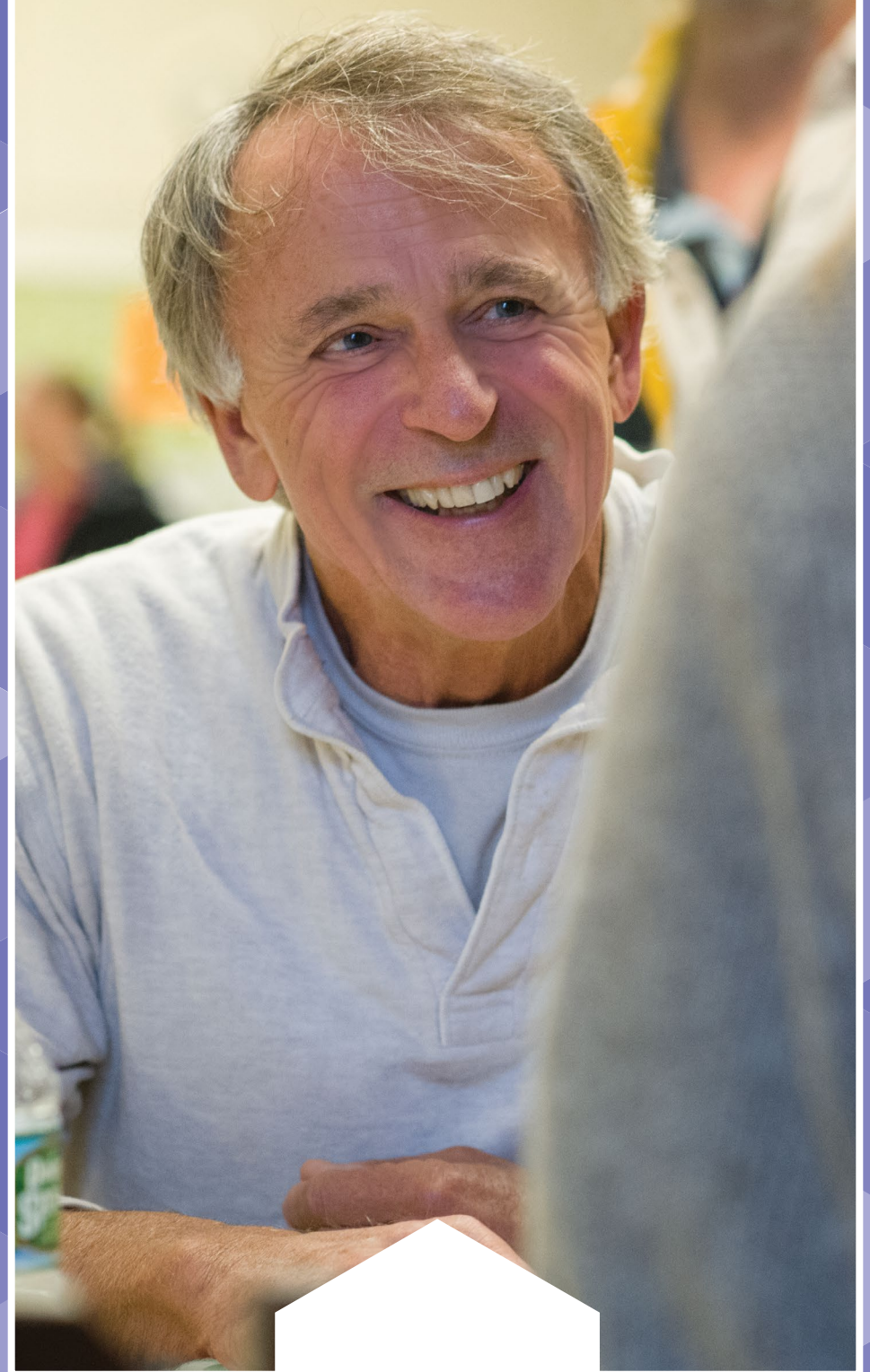
## mel martin

Mel Martin dedicates himself to serving two shifts per week at the Seasonal Overflow Shelter. Having begun a lifetime of volunteer service decades ago in Burlington, Mel has been volunteering at the SOS for the past 9 of our 10 seasons. After running a marketing agency for 23 years with his wife, he's found it's all too easy to fill a 40-hour week serving local non-profits.

In the past, Mel worked two "second shifts" per week—the most difficult slot to fill because it begins at 1am and ends at 7am—but he discovered he really wanted to spend more time with the guests while they were awake. He now includes one 7pm–1am shift per week. He said, "The difference was night and day. Pun intended."

Mel is known for circulating the room and checking on people individually. Likewise, guests are very responsive to him. He says, "When you look into their eyes, hear their stories and have conversations at the shelter and on the street, you see unique individuals that don't fit any stereotype." Many of his experiences volunteering at the SOS have inspired Mel's poetry.

He recalls with great clarity a time in the late '60's when he had run out of food and money: "I still remember the feeling of staring into an empty refrigerator and cabinets. Participating here brings a new perspective on the world around, as well as the one directly beneath your feet. I try not to take for granted that I get in my car and drive home in the morning as these folks head into the cold. It's said we never stop learning. I agree. Humility is a lifelong course."



Volunteer Mel Martin chats with a guest of the Seasonal Overflow Shelter.



## our mission & vision

Groundworks Collaborative provides ongoing support to families and individuals facing a full continuum of housing and food insecurities. *We envision a community in which every person has their basic needs met, including a safe and dignified place to call home.*

**"I'm homeless. I'm not used to being considered as a person."**  
—Groundworks Client



## staff

Libby Bennett, *Development Director*  
Heather Burrows, *Housing Support Case Manager*  
Farris Cathey, *Front Desk Coordinator (retired)*  
Vickie Coon, *Bookkeeper*  
Joshua Davis, *Executive Director*  
Heather Francisco, *Housing Support Case Manager*  
Rosie Gardner, *Food Shelf Coordinator*  
Brenda Graves, *Overnight Shelter Advocate (not pictured)*  
Aimee Hoskins, *Brattleboro Memorial Hospital On-Site RN*  
April Judd, *Business Manager*  
Jesse Kayan, *Weekend & Evening Shelter Advocate (not pictured)*  
Rhianna Kendrick, *Director of Operations*

Jenna Lanoil, *Drop-In Center AmeriCorps Member*  
Joanne Larson, *Brattleboro Retreat On-Site Clinician (not pictured)*  
Liz Lavorgna, *Food Shelf Assistant*  
Emily Hartz, *Shelter Case Manager (not pictured)*  
Effie Mayhew, *Housing Support Case Manager (not pictured)*  
Jonah Mossberg, *Evening Shelter Advocate*  
Samantha Phillips, *Representative Payee*  
Elizabeth Shenson, *Groundworks Shelter AmeriCorps Member (not pictured)*  
Lee Trapeni, *Shelter Director*  
Lawrence Wardlaw, *Front Desk Assistant*  
Michele Wright, *Housing Support Case Manager*



## board

Chad Farnum, *Brattleboro, VT - President*  
Peter Case, *Brattleboro, VT - Vice President*  
Ramprakash Rajaraman, *Northampton, MA - Treasurer*  
Scott Sharland, *Brattleboro, VT - Secretary*  
Bruce Berg, *Putney, VT (not pictured)*  
Drew Gradinger, *Putney, VT*  
George Anthes, *Brattleboro, VT*  
Jeanne Deyo, *Brattleboro, VT (not pictured)*  
Ann Fielder, *Brattleboro, VT (not pictured)*  
Mary Hayward, *Putney, VT*  
Whitney Nichols, *Brattleboro, VT*  
Rita Ramirez, *East Dummerston, VT*  
Ellen Smith, *Brattleboro, VT*  
Josh Traeger, *Brattleboro, VT*  
Thomas Zopf, *Brattleboro, VT*

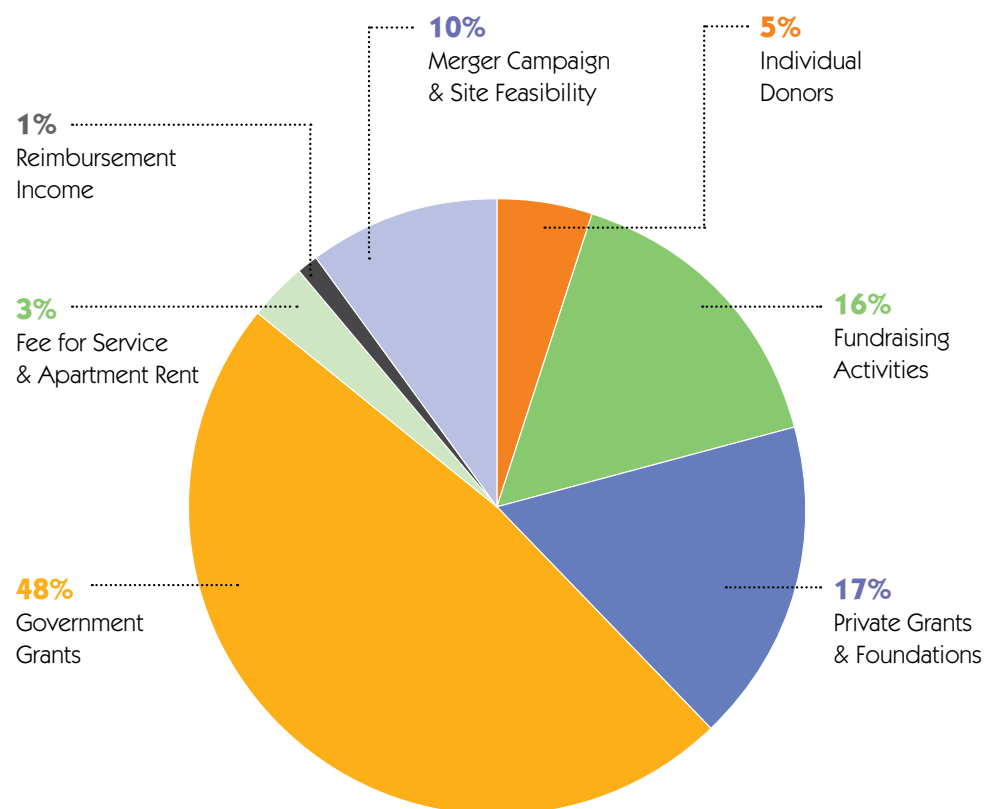
# financials

We've approached the merger as a three year process. In Year One (FY16), we planned to adequately staff the organization and search for an appropriate site to address our space needs. We added much needed staff and support to the Drop-In Center, and in an attempt to address our space needs, we invested significant resources in scrutinizing the feasibility of a potential property. We learned a lot from the feasibility process—the most important details being that the timing and financial burden were working against us, and it would not be

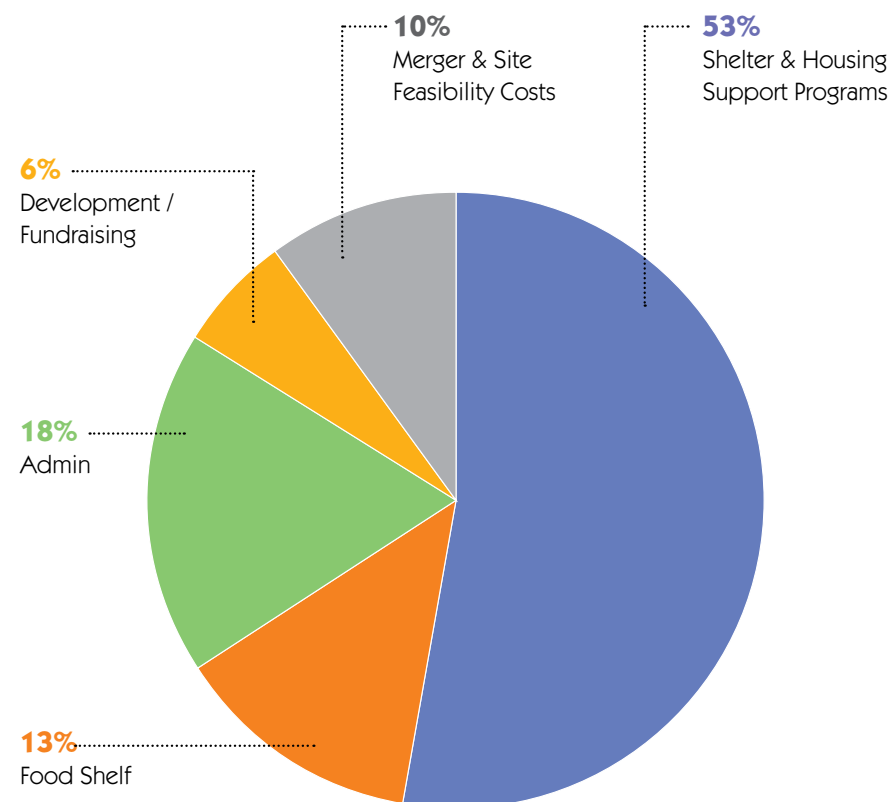
a sustainable option to develop a property in our first year as Groundworks. As a result, we ended FY16 with a larger deficit than planned. The decision has informed our fundraising strategy for this and future years. As we now approach the end of FY17, this strategy has moved the organization toward a more solid footing in preparation for a high impact capital project in the near future.

Visit [GroundworksVT.org](http://GroundworksVT.org) for a closer look at our FY16 Audited Financials.

## income \$1,027,425



## expenses \$1,238,486



## basic needs met with dignity

Groundworks Collaborative was established in 2015 following the merger of the Brattleboro Area Drop-In Center and Morningside Shelter. We provide ongoing support to families and individuals facing housing and food insecurities in the greater Brattleboro, Vermont area. Our programs include:

**Groundworks Food Shelf** In recent months, we have provided emergency food for over 1,000 individuals (roughly 650 households) per month.

**Groundworks Shelter** Our year-round 30-bed shelter for families and individuals supports residents as they secure sustainable housing.

**Seasonal Overflow Shelter** Open nightly from November through April, the SOS provides a warm place to sleep and a hot meal each night for those with nowhere else to go.

**Day Shelter / Groundworks Drop-In Center** Open Monday through Friday from 7 am to 5 pm and Saturdays from 7 am to noon, the Drop-In is a safe place where our neighbors experiencing homelessness can come in out of the elements and access services such as email, telephones, laundry, showers, coffee and a kitchen to prepare a meal.

**Housing Support Case Management** Our Case Management team works with over 100 area households to find and maintain stable housing.

**Representative Payee Program** This program provides financial management to individuals receiving Social Security disability payments (SSI & SSDI) to ensure rent and basic living expenses are paid on time each month, maintaining housing and good financial standing.

**HealthWorks** Our collaborations with the Brattleboro Retreat and Brattleboro Memorial Hospital host a Licensed Mental Health Clinician and a Registered Nurse (respectively), each providing sixteen hours per week of critical support to our clients.

**ChangeWorks** Our advocacy team is made up of staff, Board, and community members promoting empowerment for individual needs and advocating for systems change.

Groundworks Drop-In Center | 60 South Main St., Brattleboro, VT | 802.257.5415

Groundworks Shelter | 81 Royal Rd., Brattleboro, VT | 802.257.0066

## how you can help

### Donate

- **Make a Contribution Today:** Groundworks relies upon community support to provide comprehensive services to our neighbors in need.
- **Become a Monthly Sustainer:** Make a secure monthly gift online at [GroundworksVT.org](https://GroundworksVT.org) or avoid credit card fees by making an automatic monthly transfer or "bill pay" directly from your bank account.
- **Consider a Legacy Gift:** Naming Groundworks in your Will or charitable trust is a meaningful way to create a legacy, ensuring our future as we continue providing support to our community's most vulnerable citizens.
- **Stock our Shelves:** Food donations are gratefully received as determined by our need and space capacity. Donations of furniture and household items should be organized in advance by calling 802.257.5415.

### Volunteer

With fewer than 25 staff, the gift of volunteer time is incredibly appreciated!

- **SOS—support our Seasonal Overflow Shelter**
- **SOS Meal Teams—prepare and serve dinner for our SOS guests**
- **Food Shelf—sort, stock shelves, unload trucks**
- **Help with Groundworks fundraising events!**

### Advocate

- **Come for a tour and learn more about our services!**
- **Attend our community events and fundraisers!**
- **Subscribe to our e-Newsletter while visiting [GroundworksVT.org](https://GroundworksVT.org)**
- **Stay up on our activities by following Groundworks Collaborative on Facebook!**
- **Share our news with your community!**

Groundworks Collaborative | PO Box 370, Brattleboro, VT 05302

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