

Charlotte Food Shelf Inc.

Mission

To Charlotte Food Shelf Inc. is a non profit striving to provide nutritious food to those in need residing in Charlotte, Vermont or North Ferrisburg,

Since the 1990's there has been some form of food assistance offered by Charlotte citizens concerned about meeting the food insecurity needs of their neighbors. Initially non perishable food would be picked up at the Vermont Food Bank warehouse in a van and transported back to the Congregational Church parking lot where it was distributed. By 1994, storage and distribution had moved to donated space in the basement of the Charlotte Congregational Church vestry. From its inception, this effort has been supported by Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and the Charlotte Congregational donating space for drop off of food and distribution as well as food drives, regular requests for specific needs, web site support, monetary donations and assistance with funding and coordination of special projects like Christmas presents for families and the summer lunch program. In addition the Charlotte community has always been, and continues to be incredibly generous to the Food Shelf. The Food Shelf operates on this generosity as well as grants from SCHIP and donations from some businesses.

The Food Shelf has always operated independently but as stated above has also had support of both church communities and their pastors. In 1996 after the collapse of the Vermont Food-bank warehouse a new warehouse was built with Federal funds and the requirement was that it serve only federally licensed non profits. The Food Shelf was not a non profit. With the support of the pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel the Food Shelf was able to operate under the umbrella of the Diocese of the Burlington Catholic Church until 2019. In 2019 the Food Shelf became an independent non profit.

Current status and Programs:

The Food Shelf has always been and continues to be a volunteer organization with no paid employees and minimal administrative and overhead expenses, due to the generosity of time and resources of so many members of our community.

Currently there are over forty volunteers who handle such things as food procurement, purchasing, distribution, emergency requests, publicity, thank you notes, accounting, collaboration with CCS, special Holiday Programs, Fall back pack/school supplies program, winter clothing, CCS shoe in program, the summer lunch program, our Assistance Program and anything else deemed necessary.

The biggest change for the Food Shelf over the past few years is the expansion of our Assistance Program. Individuals may apply for assistance for heat, utilities, rent and other things like appliance repair and car repair.

Assistance money is also distributed in the form of supplemental shopping food cards.

Fall and winter clothes are provided for the children of our families as well as backpacks and appropriate sneakers for gym classes at CCS.

There has been a focus on outreach to better meet needs in the communities of Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh. The past year (2023 to 2024) has seen about a 40% increase in the number being served. This has prompted the Food Shelf to increase our number of distributions (3/24) to better meet our families' needs, decrease wait times and provide better access to the building. As a result it has also increased our need to purchase much more food and supplies as well as recruit more volunteers.

Currently the Food Shelf is still housed at the Charlotte Congregational Church. The Church has always been extremely generous and supportive. In the Fall (2024) the space the Church uses in the space adjacent to the Food Shelf was reorganized to give the Food Shelf more space.

Goals:

Improve Space

The identity of the Food Shelf has always been the Charlotte Food Shelf but there has never been definitive connection or collaboration with the town regarding this very important organization. The Board spent a lot of time reaching out to the community at large and searching for a new space. This included formal communication with the Selectboard, town planner and zoning administrator. To date an affordable more suitable space has not been found. This led to a plan to upgrade the current space.

When the Food Shelf became an independent non profit in 2019 the idea of collaborating with the town in a more formal way became a goal. Due to COVID, much of what was done regularly by the Food Shelf needed to change and became more demanding. Energy has been spent on day to day operations and meeting demands in a very difficult time.

Since that time the Food Shelf has focused on better organization of distributions, our volunteers, our food purchasing and more outreach to better identify needs in our community.

The Food Shelf received a Capacity Grant from the Vermont Food Bank in June of 2024 for general upgrades and reorganization of our current space. This funded a new commercial refrigerator which was purchased in November of 2024. All new shelving and new storage bins will also be purchased with this grant money as the space is redefined for better functioning.

Fundraising

PayPal was added to our website in the Fall of 2023 to make donating easier. The Board has identified the need for developing data bases and doing community outreach to raise funds.

A goal of increasing revenues by \$10,000 this fiscal year (2024-2025) to meet the increased expenses related to our mission was set. This effort was begun in the Fall of 2024 with announcements in our Charlotte News Food Shelf and mailing a article a town wide flyer. This will be an annual appeal going forward. In the Fall of 2023 PayPal was added to our website to facilitate donating.

Peggy Mahoney Sharpe, President
Charlotte Food Shelf Inc.

3/25