

Grace Cottage Awarded \$1 Million NBRC Catalyst Program Grant



We are excited to announce that Grace Cottage Family Health and Hospital has been chosen as the recipient of a \$1 million grant to help with the construction of a new primary care clinic building through the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)'s Catalyst Program! The NBRC is a Federal-State partnership for economic and community development in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Each year, the NBRC provides Federal funds for critical economic and community development projects throughout the Northeast.

"We are so pleased and excited about this \$1,000,000 Catalyst Program Grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission for construction of our new primary care practice building," said Grace Cottage CEO Olivia Sweetnam. "In granting us this award,

NBRC is validating and supporting what our community knows – the 14 practitioners in our primary care clinic are providing over 30,000 patient visits per year in two homes built in the 1840's, and we're bursting at the seams! We have the architectural plans in place and fundraising is progressing quickly for a 23,000 sq-ft. building to ensure that people in our rural area will get the excellent care that they need and deserve, and which they have come to expect from Grace Cottage!"

A total of 37 programs throughout Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont were awarded a total of \$24 million as part of the Commission's Fall 2024 round of funding. The NBRC Catalyst program strives to stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality throughout the four-state region.

This is a big boost to our fundraising efforts for this project. To date, we have raised \$13.7 million and are currently waiting for the Act 250 permit from the state. We hope to have it in hand very soon!

We are grateful to the almost 500 businesses and individuals who have contributed to the project so far.

For more information about the new clinic project, visit gracecottage.org/future or call Charma at (802) 365-9109 to schedule lunch and a tour.

Grace Cottage Wins "Best Place to Work" Award Again



For the third year in a row, Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital has been named one of Vermont's "Best Places to Work" by the *Vermont Business Magazine* - the only hospital in the state to have achieved this award each year for the past three years.

The award is given each year by *Vermont Business Magazine* and the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Society for Human Resource Management, the Vermont State Council, the Vermont

Department of Commerce and Community Development, and Workforce Research Group. It is designed to identify, recognize and honor the best places of employment in Vermont, benefiting the state's economy, workforce, and businesses.

Companies from across the state entered the contest's two-part process to determine the "Best Places to Work in Vermont." First, each company was evaluated for its workplace policies, practices, and demographics. This part of the process was worth approximately 20% of the total evaluation. The second part consisted of an anonymous employee survey to measure the



The award was accepted by Grace Cottage employees Krissi Barker, Jennifer Newman, Michael McCormack, Julie Wolf, and Jennifer Studin.

employee experience, with this score worth approximately 80% of the total evaluation.

The "Best Places to Work" contest includes three categories: Small Businesses (15-99 employees), Medium Businesses (100-249 employees), and Large Businesses (250+ employees). Grace Cottage won 4th place in the Medium Business Category.

A Word From the CEO



Healthcare finances have been in Vermont news a lot lately. The cost of delivering care has been rising steadily in our state, and commercial premiums are untenable. The pressure is on for all players to find a solution, and we are committed to doing our part.

This work is underway here at Grace Cottage. We have been working diligently over the past six months to improve our efficiency and lower costs without compromising our standards in delivering the

best care possible. We have made improvements in our clinic to ensure we have availability for our patients, enhancing access so they can get the care they want, when they need it. Our emergency department is

open 24/7 and we just finished excellent training with our nursing staff and providers to make sure we are offering the most up to date care possible.

In these challenging times, we are especially grateful for your support and trust. Our commitment to caring for and delivering compassionate, high-quality care to our patients has never been stronger and we're honored to care for everyone who needs us.

The warmer weather is a great motivator to get outside. I hope to see you at our spring and summer events!

— *Olivia Sweetnam, CEO*

Grace Cottage CEO Olivia Sweetnam e-mails an informative *Message to the Community* once a month. To receive this communication, send an e-mail to info@gracecottage.org with the subject line "Add me to your Message to the Community."

Big Thank You to Big Picture Farm

Our friends, Lucas Farrell and Louisa Conrad from Big Picture Farm in Townshend, held an open farm fundraiser for Grace Cottage. Many folks attended, held baby goats and kittens, and strolled the fields with chickens, friendly sheepdogs, and the big goats. We're thankful for the support and the snuggles!



2024 Community Health Needs Assessment Now Available

**HEALTH
NEEDS
SURVEY**



Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years, in partnership with Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and the Brattleboro Retreat. CHNA is an essential part of determining how to focus our efforts, based on

what the community identifies as their greatest needs.

A total of 524 individuals completed the publicly-available 2024 health needs survey. In addition, four focus groups were held to get input from traditionally marginalized sub-groups of the population. Area social service organizations also provided valuable information. The report and Grace Cottage's action plan on the identified priorities are both available on Grace Cottage's website, gracecottage.org

Cottage Door

is published by Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital
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Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. The mission of Grace Cottage Foundation is to raise funds on behalf of Grace Cottage.

Donations to Grace Cottage Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Grace Cottage Foundation's Federal Tax ID # is: 03-0343282.

Donations may be made by cash, credit card, check, stocks, bonds, or other tangible assets.
Call Charma Bonanno at (802) 365-9109.

A grateful patient writes:

"Often as not, people are quick to find fault with one thing or another. I can't say that I did when visiting Grace Cottage. I saw a lovely country hospital, completely up to date and providing excellent medical care as needed. It was definitely a positive hospital experience." — *Joan Sullivan, Reading, VT*

Employee Milestones



40 YEARS

Kerry Capponcelli, *Nursing*
Dr. Timothy Shafer, *Family Health*

30 YEARS

Amie Leavitt, *Social Services*

20 YEARS

Christine Gleason, *Environmental Services*
Dana West, *Purchasing*

15 YEARS

Scott Hitchcock, *Facilities*
Catherine Nemchek, *Administration*
Marina Potter, *Environmental Services*

10 YEARS

Jessica Emerson, *Social Services*
Natalie Harding, *Family Health*

5 YEARS

Melissa Bills, *Scheduling*
Charma Bonanno, *Foundation*
Teresa Castro, *Rehabilitation*
Donald Houle, *Family Health*
Carmen Jones, *Medical Records*
Stephen Kapral, *Pharmacy*
Christina Nelson, *Nursing*
Jennifer Newman, *Human Resources*
Theresa Olds, *Family Health*
Josh Rosenblum, *Emergency Department*
Jocelyn Smith, *Business Office*

Congratulations To Deb Record

After 43 years at Grace Cottage, Deb (also known as Debra, Debbie, and “everyone’s relative”) Record retired at the end of February from her position as Billing Specialist. Deb joined Grace Cottage soon after she graduated from college and she has worn many, many local hats: as a volunteer for the NewBrook Fire Department, Grace Cottage Hospital Fair Day, an elementary school baseball and softball coach, after-school ski instructor, and assistant varsity softball coach at Leland & Gray. Deb, her husband, Greg, and their three children, Teresa, Caleb, and Sadie, were all born at Grace Cottage!

Deb plans to travel and to spend more time with her five grandchildren. We all wish her the very best.



Wishes Granted...

- Kathy & Steve Squires made a donation for the purchase of assorted pots, pans, and bowls for the Dietary Department.
- June Dibble made a gift for the purchase of a urinalysis analyzer for the Laboratory.
- Anna Mae Ray donated funds to purchase three transport chairs for the clinic, in memory of Everett Bishop, Mabel Ray, and Joseph Ray.
- Elliott & Pam Greenblott donated funds for several items needed in the Emergency Department and many Outpatient Rehab items.
- Charlotte Choleva donated the funds for a cold beverage dispenser for the Dietary Department, in honor of Denise Choleva.
- Doug & Muriel Hard donated funds to purchase a Take-a-Swing Frame with a bolster swing and a cocoon swing for the Outpatient Rehab Department.



Wishes Made...

- The Hospital Inpatient unit is in need of four more bedside tables. \$630 each.
- The Dietary Department requests funds for a commercial food processor & emulsifier for patients who can't easily swallow. \$2,795.
- Two additional digital scales are needed in the primary care practice. \$400 each.
- The Laboratory needs a new microbiology incubator. \$2,400.
- Outpatient Rehabilitation requests funds for a platform swing (\$500) and mats (\$600), a sensory fish bubble light (\$95), and an inflatable pea pod chair (\$90), for pediatric care.
- Inpatient Rehabilitation needs walkers. \$55.
- Housekeeping staff would benefit from a new floor scrubber. \$1,730.

A grateful patient writes:

“I was admitted to Grace Cottage Hospital recently. I can’t say enough good words about how welcoming, warm, and professional the staff was. The care I was given was amazing. The ER was very swift and on top of what was going on with me. I would definitely go back there; no question. Thank you, Grace Cottage Hospital, and staff for the care that you gave me. I would rate your facility and staff a 10 and, once again, thank you so much for all the loving care you gave me. It got me back on my feet and well again.”

– Maureen Holden, Newfane, VT



Make Tracks for Health

We enjoyed magnificent weather and an excellent base of snow for our second annual *Make Tracks for Health* XC ski/snowshoe event at the Nordic Center at Stratton on Saturday, March 1. Almost \$4,500 was raised for construction of Grace Cottage's new Primary Care Clinic, thanks to more than 25 volunteers, participants, and our generous sponsors: Harmonyville Store, M&T Bank, Rawsonville Market, Solstice at Stratton, Stratton Resort, Wadsworth Design/Build & Vermont Barns, and James A. Young, Counselor at Law.



Save the date for next year's *Make Tracks for Health* at the Stratton Nordic Center:
Saturday, March 7, 2026, 10 - noon.

Cabin Fever Online Auction

A heartfelt "Thank You!" to the many generous businesses and individuals that donated a staggering 195 items. With 297 generous and enthusiastic bidders, our February auction raised \$25,561.85 for our new Primary Care Clinic project. Bidders enjoyed the great variety of items from the practical to the sublime, including art, vacations, gift certificates, pottery, jewelry, furniture, plants, and much more, ranging from \$7 to \$4,500. We all had fun and appreciate all who support Grace Cottage in this way. Next year's Cabin Fever Auction will begin on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2026 – it's a great way to beat those mid-winter blues!



16th Annual Tee It Up For Health Golf Tournament Saturday, June 7; noon shotgun start, Haystack Golf Club in Wilmington

We are excited to be "Back at the Stack", otherwise known as the beautiful Haystack Golf Club again this year! The proceeds of this year's event will go toward the construction of a much-needed new primary care clinic building on our campus.

Thank you to our Sponsors to date, including:

EVENT SPONSORS: The Richards Group; Haystack Golf Club

GOLD SPONSOR: Brook Field Service

PLATINUM SPONSORS: Community Bank, Coverys, M&T Bank, Elizabeth Walker

SILVER SPONSORS: 802 Credit Union, Andy & Linda Barber, Linda Bastian, Casella Waste Systems, Lavallee Brensinger, Lawrence & Lober Electric, New England Construction & Property Management, West River Family Dental

HOLE SPONSORS: Artisanal Cellars, Baker Newman Noyes, Berkley & Veller Greenwood Country Realtors, Brattleboro Savings & Loan, Chroma Technology, Costello Valente & Gentry, Edward Jones, Farnum Insulators, Howard Printing, Inc., J. Evans Construction, Members First Credit Union, Northeast Delta Dental, Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer, SERVPRO of Windham & Windsor Counties, Ski Country Legal, WW Building Supply

BRONZE SPONSORS: Blue Cross Blue Shield VT, Lawton Flooring, Pepsi Brattleboro

FLAG SPONSORS: Deerfield Valley News in memory of Dick Raymo, June Dibble in memory of Phil Dibble, W&B Management in memory of Effie Chamberlin and in memory of Wally & Eleanor Lowe

Don't see your name above? We'd love to have you join our family of supporters for this important fundraising event!

Please call Charma at 802-365-9109 or e-mail info@gracecottage.org.



A grateful patient writes:

"After I fell at my home recently, I went to Grace Cottage. It was my very first time using the ER there (although I'm a big and longtime fan of your other services, including primary care and Messenger Valley Pharmacy!). An x-ray revealed that I had broken the metatarsal bone in my foot. I was so impressed by how fast I was seen by the staff, with no waiting, and the professional care delivered by Brittney Book.

It couldn't have gone better! Thank you all so much!" – John "Zippo" Frechette, Newfane, VT

75TH ANNUAL FAIR DAY

Saturday, August 2, 2025

Townshend Common, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Free Admission | Free Parking | Free Entertainment

I am really looking forward to Grace Cottage Hospital Fair Day this year. In these challenging times, the thought of the Fair brings me peace and hope. I feel at peace working with hundreds of volunteers who share the same vision of community-based healthcare that is greatly needed in our rural communities. I feel peaceful when I hear children laughing at the Fish Pond and running around the Common. I enjoy the sound of adults laughing while they catch up with old friends and enjoy each other's company. It is this that brings me peace during stressful times.



Fair Day also brings me hope for the future. In the collaboration of putting together Fair Day, I see a dedicated community of Grace Cottage employees working closely with volunteers. It illustrates, for me, that Grace Cottage is such an integral part of Townshend and its surrounding towns. I have hope that we will weather the healthcare challenges our state faces. I know that we will continue to support our hospital and family health practice to thrive for the next 75 years!



Now is the time to join in this community effort and find your peace and hope for the future. Leading up to Fair Day, there are many ways to be a part of it and support the Fair. You can volunteer to help with a booth and enjoy the camaraderie.

You can donate items to the Fair's variety of booths or the auction. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me or Helen Holt at gracecottagefair@gmail.com, or call me at 802-365-4455. The proceeds of this year's Hospital Fair Day will go toward the construction of a much-needed new primary care clinic building.

From now through mid-July, we are looking for helpers and donations for the many booths:

Art: Framed art is very popular at the Fair, watercolors, acrylics, oils, pen & ink drawings.

Books: Fiction or nonfiction books in good condition. Paperback or hardcover are welcome. No textbooks or encyclopedias, please.

Cars/Trucks/Motorcycles/Boats: These "big toys" always generate a lot of excitement and provide a tax write-off to the donor.

Furniture: The auction seeks items in good condition to be vetted by the Foundation Department at Grace Cottage. We cannot accept mattresses, fitness equipment, computers, large or upholstered furniture.

White Elephant: Dishes, bric-a-brac, kitchen items, glassware, baskets, toys, sporting goods, and Christmas decorations are all welcome.

Jewelry: Fine or costume. Necklaces, rings, watches, bracelets. Also, accessories such as hats, belts, handbags, scarves, and wallets.

Plants: Annuals and Perennials. Want a volunteer to dig them from your garden? If you live nearby, we can arrange this.

We will welcome back Brian Tebo, of Heart Felt Antiques of Bennington, to head up our Auction. Live music will play throughout the day by the ever-popular groups of Ralph Sherman and Friends, Luminous Crush, and The Buzzards.

This year, we will have a special 75th anniversary quilt for the raffle made by quilter Deb Record.

I look forward to seeing you, hearing your laughter, and enjoying our collective peace from community in this, our 75th HOSPITAL FAIR DAY!

– *Connie Holt*, Fair Day Co-Chair

Here is the list of Booth Chairs who look forward to having volunteers. If you are interested, please contact Connie Holt at 802-365-4455 or gracecottagefair@gmail.com.

Auction: Andy Coyne and Heart Felt Antiques & Auction Service

Birthday Parade: Patsy Bemis

Books: Kate Marrow

Corn/Watermelon: Diane Bousquet & GCH Rehab Dept.

Cotton Candy: Marcy Moody

Face Painting: Steven & Karren Meyer

Fish Pond: Greg Dean & Cub Scout Pack #448

Food Booth: Chris Glebus

Fried Dough: Linda Columbus & Scott & Michelle Rohde

Gourmet Food: Jean McIntire

Hole-in-One: Sindy Hassig

Ice Cream: Julia & Stuart Duke

Iced Coffee: Debbie Boyle & M&T Bank

Jewelry: Heather Boucher

Parking: Kirk Petty

Pictures, Frames & Art: Natalie Donovan & Carrie Schafer

Pies & Baked Goods: Jodi Perkins & Sarah Perkins

Plants: Sally Winchester

Popcorn & Balloons: Mike Attley

Raffle: Grace Cottage Foundation

T-Shirts & Hats: Barb Barber

Treasurer: Stephen Brown

White Elephant: Connie Holt, Helen Holt

Grace Cottage Offers Additional Strong Bones Classes

Grace Cottage will be offering another hour-long 'Strong Bones' class starting at 9 am on Mondays and Wednesdays. This is in addition to the Monday/Wednesday 10:30 am and 4 pm classes, and the Tuesday/Thursday 10:30 am class.

Grace Cottage's Strong Bones Program is a strength and balance exercise program for adults and is appropriate for both sedentary and active individuals. Research has shown that strength and balance training can help adults to live healthier, happier, and more independent lives.

All Strong Bones classes are held on the West Crispe Porch next to the hospital cafeteria.

The Strong Bones Program is free, but pre-registration is required, and classes are limited to 12 participants. For more information and to pre-register, call 802-365-3649.



Annual Emergency Skill Training Day

To keep our nurses at the very top of their practice, Nurse Educator Julie Wolf plans regular training sessions, like one held on April 30 on Emergency Competencies. There are some serious medical emergencies that are very infrequent, so it is important that our staff have the opportunity to practice their skills with lifesaving equipment to ensure that they are ready for any situation.



A grateful patient writes:

"Where do I even begin to describe what an amazing experience I had at Grace Cottage Hospital?

From the moment I walked in the ER door, I felt at ease, even though I was quite anxious. Once I filled out paperwork, I was immediately brought into the emergency area, where I met the nurses, and soon after that the P.A. on call that evening, all of whom were referred to on a first-name basis (who does that in a hospital emergency room?). Let me just say it was a bit surreal, but in the best way possible. I immediately felt at home and at ease, even though I was going through an episode.

I still get choked up thinking about the amazing, caring experience I had there. When I left, I literally gave hugs to the two nurses and P.A. that tended to me (Molly, Chris, and Josh - you all freakin' rock man), and I felt like I had made friends for life in a little over 3 hours (and next time I'm up your way, I'm gonna take you all out to dinner to show my gratitude!).

After all of this, it gives me hope that there are still good, kind, caring people out there in this great country of ours, and that healthcare **can** be a good experience when people love their jobs and where they work.

Please keep on doing what you do at Grace Cottage Hospital, because in my opinion, you are second to none.

Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart!"

– *Keith Greener*, Pennington, NJ

Posted on Yelp and Facebook

The Gift of Giving



John Barker Willard, Jr.

Grace Cottage was recently notified of a generous bequest from John Barker Willard, Jr. (known to friends as "Bark") of Wilmington, Vermont. He was born in Wilmington in 1935 and graduated from Wilmington High School. He

then joined the Air Force and was stationed in Alaska as a radar operator for a time before returning to Vermont. He married Nancy Darden in 1961, and they raised two children: Allison and Barker.

Bark joined the Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department in 1959, serving as Chief from 1969 to 1982. He was a talented carpenter and loved fishing and hunting. He had a generous heart, and we are grateful to Bark for remembering Grace Cottage in his estate plans.

His daughter, Allison said that Bark was "thrilled" to be able to support Grace Cottage, as well as other worthy causes in the area.



Gundela Weindl

Grace Cottage has received the final payment from the Estate of Gundela Weindl. Gundi was a good friend to Grace Cottage. She and her husband Eric were beloved members of the community, who ran The Newfane Inn for many years. Gundi volunteered at Grace

Cottage and decided to include the hospital in her estate planning. We are very grateful.

The Andrea Seaton Fund

We are all deeply touched by the outpouring of gifts in honor of Andrea Seaton, which total over \$155,000 to date! Andrea retired in April, after 28 years at Grace Cottage Foundation. In that time, she raised millions of dollars for Grace Cottage, helped launch our Spring events, and celebrated 28 Hospital Fair Days!



Photo courtesy of Paula Streeter

Anyone who knows her will not be surprised to hear that she has kept very busy: traveling, seeing friends, playing pickleball, and most importantly, spending time with her baby granddaughter. Gifts to the Andrea Seaton Fund will go toward our new Primary Care Clinic building, a project that Andrea worked tirelessly to make a reality. If you would like to contribute, please include a note reading, "For the Andrea Seaton Fund" with your donation, either by check to Grace Cottage at P.O. Box 1 in Townshend, or online at gracecottage.org.

Donations Were Recently Received In Honor Of:

Dr. Ewa Arnold ♦ David Brown ♦ Denise Choleva ♦ Grace Cottage Clinic Staff ♦ Grace Cottage Emergency Dept.
Grace Cottage Employees ♦ Grace Cottage Rehab Staff ♦ Grace Cottage Volunteers ♦ Dr. Moss Linder ♦ Chris McIntosh
Jari Priessman ♦ Josh Rosenblum ♦ Andrea Seaton ♦ Andrew Semegram ♦ Dr. Timothy Shafer & Deborah Lusk
Irvin Stowell ♦ Molly Teich ♦ Dr. Robert Tortolani

Memorial Gifts

Donations have been received between January 11-May 8 in memory of the following individuals:

Homer Adams ♦ Alwin & Joyce Ameden ♦ Isabelle Ameden ♦ Peggy Baran ♦ Everett Bishop ♦ Ethel "Margo" Boyd
Farren Bratton ♦ Junior & Gladys Brooks ♦ Beryl Berry Brown ♦ Gladys Brown ♦ Kevin Brown ♦ Bruce Chapin
Chris Coleman ♦ Phil Coleman ♦ Robert Crowell ♦ Ursula Dalem ♦ Mildred Danielski ♦ Neal Michael Dietz
Andrew Dolan ♦ Joan & Ted Dunham ♦ Victor English ♦ Brian A. Evans ♦ Nat & Irene Fillow ♦ Cora Fletcher ♦ Joan Flynn
Leonard Hall ♦ Donald Hazelton ♦ Cliff Heilig ♦ Julia Holland ♦ Stan Holt ♦ Burt Howard ♦ Cameron Howard ♦ Joel Johnson
Amy Kleppner ♦ Jack Lambert ♦ Richard & Ruth Lapan ♦ Don Leigh ♦ Jamis Lott ♦ Freda Maggio ♦ Jeanne Marion
Larry Martin ♦ Karen & Kevin Maurer ♦ Francis Momaney, Sr. ♦ John Nardone ♦ Guy Nido ♦ Bob O'Brien ♦ Dr. Carlos Otis
Bob Phelps ♦ Dr. Blake & Helen Prescott ♦ Joseph & Mabel Ray ♦ Dorothy Reid ♦ Hank Sanders
Edward Silver ♦ Chester Sowa ♦ Bethany Sparks ♦ Maryann Sparks ♦ David Stevens ♦ Sam A. Stevens ♦ Abbi T. Stevens
Shepard & Charlotte Stone ♦ Catherine N. Stratton ♦ William & Leona Tabell ♦ George & Molly Tomlinson ♦ Betsy Waldo
Len & Bernice Welch ♦ John B. Willard, Jr. ♦ Christine Wilson ♦ Dr. Marvin Wool ♦ Robert Works ♦ Carrie Zahacewski

We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of these loved ones, and our appreciation to those who have given in their memories.

When memorial gifts are received by Grace Cottage, the donor is thanked, and the next of kin is notified of the gift. (The amount given is never divulged.)

A grateful patient writes:

"All the staff at Grace Cottage were attentive, took their time with me, and were accurate in their diagnosis. People were kind and empathetic."

— Margaret van den Bergh,
Saxtons River, VT



GraceCottage

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John & Susan Eastwood Outpatient Rehabilitation Services at Grace Cottage

It's unanimous! Our physical and occupational therapy patients love our new facility in the Heins Building. With more space and updated equipment, our staff is able to help more people move better, faster.

