

## The Advocate - March 2022

### Thank You and Farewell to Steve Geller



### SEVCA Hosts Gathering Honoring Retirement of Executive Director Steve Geller

On February 18, 2022, following 17 years of dedicated leadership as Executive Director of Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA), and four decades of leadership in the Community Action network – not only in Vermont but also in New England and nationally – Steve Geller retired. Staff honored Geller with a ‘shout out’ session during the quarterly all-staff meeting in February.

Members of SEVCA’s Board of Directors and colleagues from around the state and throughout the country gathered via Zoom on Steve’s last day to share memories and well wishes. Among those in attendance were Denise Harlow, CEO of the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP), of which Steve was a board member; fellow NCAP board member, Peter Kilde; former Vermont state legislators, David Deen and Karen Lafayette; fellow VT Community Action Executive Directors, Hal Cohen (formerly of Capstone), Sue Minter (current Capstone Executive Director), and David Tucker (former Director of both the VT Office of Economic Opportunity and Northeast Kingdom Community Action); Sarah Phillips (current Director of the VT Office of Economic Opportunity); local government and nonprofit leaders, including Gary Fox, representing the Town of Rockingham, Robert McBride of Southern VT Zone, and Joshua Dufresne, CEO of Springfield Medical Care Systems; former SEVCA board members Kathy Poston, Timm Harris, Betty and Hugh Haggerty, Gladys Collins; members of the SEVCA Director Team, Carolyn Sweet, Victor Baisley, Kathleen Devlin, and Glen Ohlund; and long-time SEVCA Executive Assistant (now retired), Linda Brooks.

“It’s been an enormous privilege and pleasure to be a partner in the fight against poverty as waged by the caring and committed staff at SEVCA day – after day for the past 17 years,” said Geller. “There has never been a time when the outcomes Community Action helps to produce have been more vital, and I couldn’t be prouder about the role I played to enable that to happen. I can’t imagine devoting over half my life to anything more fulfilling and it’s very difficult to see it end, but I leave knowing that my colleagues at SEVCA and our sister organizations in Vermont and across the country will

continue the fight in ways that meet people's needs, improve their lives and enhance our communities, now and in the future."

The staff and Board of Directors of SEVCA wish Steve all of the best in the next stage of the journey.

SEVCA welcomes Kevin Brennan as Interim Executive Director.

---



### **SEVCA's Annual Appeal is Coming to a Close and We Have Nearly Reached Our Goal!**

Our success in achieving our goal depends in great part on the willingness of compassionate and generous folks like you to be our partners in it. A donation to SEVCA helps ensure that our work- to maximize the likelihood that everyone has enough to thrive- can remain strong, nimble, and sustainable...now and into the future.

***Will you contribute to the effort to fully fund SEVCA's programs so that in Vermont, Everyone Thrives as well?***

**Click [HERE](#) to make a contribution.**

Gratefully,

SEVCA Staff and Board of Directors

**Introducing Our New Program - Green Saving Smart**



Ana Mejia, Financial & Energy Coach for the Green Saving Smart program

SEVCA is thrilled to welcome Ana Mejia onboard as the Financial & Energy Coach for a new statewide initiative, Green Saving Smart. The new program will focus on helping eligible households explore opportunities to reduce their energy and transportation expenses while also reducing their reliance on fossil fuels.

Meet Ana! Ana enjoys working with people to set and achieve goals and empowering people to tackle energy and climate challenges. She gained extensive experience in community outreach and connecting residents with resources to meet their individual needs through her former roles as a climate projects coordinator at a nonprofit, a parent liaison for Head Start, and most recently as assistant town clerk in Hartland where she lives. Ana looks forward to assisting eligible families access energy efficiency rebates, incentives, and free services to reduce their carbon footprint, make their homes more comfortable, and save money.

The Financial & Energy Coaching pilot, Green Saving Smart, is a 3-year statewide initiative in partnership with the five Vermont Community Action Agencies - including BROC Community Action, Capstone Community Action, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA), and Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA). Each office will offer financial coaching services combined with energy efficiency coaching to eligible participants for free.

For more information please visit [here](#).

---

**VT Everyone Eats Extended Again!**



**This Just In:**  
**Meals to Continue**  
**Through July 1, 2022**

**#VTEVERYONEEATS**

FOR MORE INFO:  
VTEVERYONEEATS.ORG

Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE), the unique COVID-19 recovery program that provides Vermonters impacted by COVID with prepared meals made by Vermont restaurants using locally grown and produced ingredients, will continue through July 1, 2022. The program had previously been set to end on March 31st, but will now continue due to FEMA's 100% cost share being extended for existing COVID-19 relief programs. While the health impact of the latest surge has recently receded, the long tail of the economic crisis continues to challenge restaurants, farmers, food producers, and individuals. The Vermont Everyone Eats program both feeds people and strengthens the state economy at the same time. Regional hubs purchase and distribute meals from local restaurants, and a statewide mobile app provides meal access to eaters directly from restaurants. Full press release [here](#).

For more information on the program or how to receive a meal, please visit [here](#). To join the conversation: [#vteveryoneeats](#)

### **Crisis Fuel and VERAP Still Available**

Worried about running out of heating fuel? Received an electric disconnect? Give SEVCA a call and we may be able to help. The crisis fuel season has been extended until April 29th! We may also be able to help households who have already received crisis fuel assistance. Eligibility criteria apply.

---

The Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) continues to offer assistance to eligible households that are dealing with financial challenges related to COVID-19. VERAP can help pay rent, past-due rent, utilities, past-due utilities, and other expenses related to housing. More information is available [here](#). Please give us a call for assistance applying.

SEVCA Family Services can be reached by calling 800-464-9951 (listen to the auto-prompt for your local office - Brattleboro, Springfield, Westminster, or White River Junction).

## Head Start Enrollment Ongoing!



A Head Start Student Engaging in Hands-On Learning!

SEVCA's Windsor County Head Start program, available at no-cost to eligible families, continues to enroll children ages 3 - 5 on an ongoing basis. For more information or to complete an application for enrollment, please call 800-464-9951, dial 9 for staff directory, and enter the name of the Family Partner in the area closest to the town you live in: Katie Murphy (Chester), Lindsay DeCell (Springfield), or Jen Tucker (Windsor/White River Junction).

For more information check out SEVCA Windsor County Head Start's NEW website [here!](#)

## Spring Cleaning?

Consider Donating to SEVCA's 'Good Buy' Thrift Stores



GRATEFULLY  
ACCEPTING  
CLEAN,  
REUSABLE  
CLOTHING &  
HOUSEHOLD  
ITEMS



Doing some spring cleaning, moving, or redecorating? SEVCA's 'Good Buy' Thrift Stores welcome your donations, which will help benefit neighbors in your community. A few reminders about drop offs:

- \* Donations are generally accepted between 10 am - 2 pm, though please call ahead to confirm
- \* We're currently accepting 2 bags or boxes per day

Many thanks for your generosity!

---

If you're shopping in our stores, receive 10% off your purchase if you mention this ad.

Hours, Locations & Contact Info:

Bellows Falls, VT  
45 Rockingham Street/Canal House  
802-463-9084  
Monday - Saturday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Springfield, VT  
23 Main Street  
802-885-7074  
Monday - Saturday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

### **SEVCA Offering Free Money Management Workshop Series This April!**



This April, SEVCA is providing a series of four Financial Fitness workshops to provide training, support, and resources to help participants gain control and manage their money. Workshop topics include: creating a personal, workable budget; reducing debt; setting personal goals;

modifying spending; basics of banking; plus credit. Workshops are free to Vermont residents and will be held virtually. SEVCA will provide a gift card cash incentive to those Vermont residents affected by COVID-19 who attend workshops 1, 2, and 3. For more information please visit [here](#) or email: [dheileman@sevca.org](mailto:dheileman@sevca.org).

### **3SquaresVT Helps Vermonters Put Healthy Food on the Table - and Helps Our Community Grow Stronger!**



**SEVCA Can  
Help You Sign  
Up for  
3SquaresVT**

**Food is a  
basic  
need.**

Food is a basic need. We are ready and willing to help with applications for 3SquaresVT benefits, which can help you put healthy food on the table. Applying for 3SquaresVT is also a path toward economic independence. By receiving and spending your benefits, you help yourself and your community. The money you spend at the grocery store helps grocery store owners and clerks pay their own rent, their utility bills, and put food on their own tables. Let us help you apply. Give us a call at 800-464-9951 and listen to the auto-prompt for your local family services office or fill out [this form](#) and a staff member will reach out to you.

### **No-Cost Weatherization Services Available**

SEVCA's Weatherization program continues to offer no-cost services to eligible Windham and Windsor County households, including: energy audits, insulation and sealing, heating system improvements, and other energy-saving updates. To learn more or apply, visit [here](#) or contact our client representative, Tawny Staskunas: 800-464-9951 and press 1 for Weatherization. Please note that there is currently a long waiting list as these services are in high demand.



## Golf Tournament Postponed

SEVCA's Annual Golf Tournament, Chipping Away at Poverty, has been canceled this year. This will enable staff to remain focused on delivering services to those community members impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This well-loved event benefits a variety of programs at the agency and those who wish to make a donation may do so [online](#) or by mailing a check to SEVCA, 91 Buck Drive, Westminister VT 05158. Please make a note that the donation is in lieu of a golf tournament donation. Those interested in volunteering for a likely event in 2023 can contact Carolyn Sweet, Director of Planning and Development, at [csweet@sevca.org](mailto:csweet@sevca.org).

## How Are We Doing?

Have you recently received one of our services or used one of our programs? We'd appreciate your feedback so that we can understand our impact, and learn how to best serve the community.

**Would you please help us out by taking [this quick five minute survey](#)?**

If you complete the survey, you could win one of three raffled cash cards for \$50 (winners will be drawn every three months) or one of four end-of-year raffled cash cards for \$100 (winners will be drawn in October, 2022)!

## Board of Directors News

We welcome Margot Holmes, who joined the Board of Directors in February. Margot is the Executive Director of the Springfield Area Parent-Child Center.

Thank you and farewell to Ross Gibson, and to Ellen Taetszch, who have left the Board to pursue other opportunities.

If you are interested in learning more about SEVCA Board Membership, please contact Tammie Putnam, Executive Assistant, [tputnam@sevca.org](mailto:tputnam@sevca.org) or 800-464-9951 ext. 1105.

## New Hires

We are excited to welcome the following new staff members to the SEVCA team:

- Kelly Mendoza – Receptionist/Administrative Assistant
- Kristi Menter - Data Entry and Administrative Assistant
- Amanda Witman – Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, VT Everyone Eats
- Chris Meyer – Special Projects Coordinator, VT Everyone Eats
- Chris Brittain - Research Associate, VT Everyone Eats
- Claire Whitehouse - Research Associate, VT Everyone Eats
- Ana Mejia – Financial & Energy Coach, Economic Development
- Beth Lutz - Teacher Assistant, Head Start Northwoods Preschool
- Meagan Hannigan - Teacher Assistant, Head Start Children's Place Preschool

- Kayley Boissonnault - Teacher Associate, Head Start Chester Community Preschool
- Briana Stariknok - Teacher Assistant, Head Start Chester Community Preschool
- Gabriel Sistare - Weatherization Crew Technician
- Joshua Aldrich - Weatherization Business Administrator
- Bob Silva - Home Repair Program Coordinator

**Looking to Serve Your Community? Join Us!**

Want to join a growing industry, reduce carbon emissions, and help others?

# We Are Hiring!

## Weatherization Crew Tech

---

To apply: email resume & cover letter to [vbaisley@sevca.org](mailto:vbaisley@sevca.org)  
More info: [sevca.org/employment](http://sevca.org/employment)

For more information on joining SEVCA as a Weatherization Crew Tech, or for information on other exciting career opportunities with us, please visit [here](#).

Visit our Website



Southeastern Vermont Community Action | 91 Buck Drive, Westminster, VT 05301

[Unsubscribe cwsweet@sevca.org](mailto:cwsweet@sevca.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [About Constant Contact](#)

Sent by [cwsweet@sevca.org](mailto:cwsweet@sevca.org) in collaboration with

