



RuralEdge

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Northeast Kingdom Communities,
One Home at a Time.



2023 Annual Report



Throughout the Northeast Kingdom, We Are All in This Together

A Note from our Executive Director & Board of Directors

As one enters the town of Groton on Route 302 from either the east or the west, a welcome sign greets them that reads, “Welcome to Groton, Where a small town is like a large family”

This message represents well the tenets of what we see and know is true across the Northeast Kingdom – overwhelming community pride, a willingness to take care of people, and a sense that we are all in this together.

The breadth and diversity of RuralEdge’s work demonstrates those beliefs and through this report we share some of our experiences from the last year, working in partnership with our communities to help our neighbors and support them, like family.

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From partnering with our friends at NEKCA to quickly set up the Shelter at Moose River for our most vulnerable neighbors, to preserving and expanding affordable housing opportunities and supporting existing elderly and disabled residents through the process, RuralEdge is committed to strengthening Northeast Kingdom communities, one home at a time. We are partnered with local landlords to bring units back to the market, helping them build equity while making necessary improvements in our region’s housing. We are working with local police departments to strengthen public safety and work together with our tenants to generate awareness and make sure everyone is doing their part.

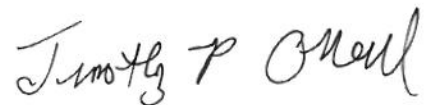
As Tim Kidder, a former guest at the Shelter at Moose River who has now secured permanent housing in a privately owned apartment renovated through our VHIP program, says, “You can always turn a negative into a positive with the right resources and the right people supporting you”.

Like the message conveyed by Groton’s sign, we at RuralEdge understand that, like a family, through all the struggles and challenges, we are in this together, and we will be stronger as a result.

Thank you for your support of our work and your willingness to join us in these efforts.



Patrick Shattuck
Executive Director



Tim O'Neill
Board Chair



Opening Doors, Changing Lives: The Shelter at Moose River



The shelter provides beds for up to twenty individuals, with shared community spaces, a full kitchen, and on-site supports and services.

In the summer of 2023, over 150 households were experiencing homelessness in the Northeast Kingdom alone. With a severe housing crisis in our area and no emergency shelter options, Vermonters in the Northeast Kingdom had nowhere to turn when faced with homelessness. With the severe cold of Vermont's winter months fast approaching, the need to establish a shelter quickly was critical.

Historically, zoning regulations made it difficult to institute a shelter in St. Johnsbury. Shelters were required to be within a single district near the hospital which, unfortunately, is not an area particularly convenient for accessing valuable resources found in town. Fortunately, provisions of the HOME Act, passed by Vermont lawmakers in June, now limit the ability of towns to place zoning restrictions on the location of shelters.

RuralEdge was able to purchase a landlocked parcel surrounded by existing RuralEdge property from The Father's House, Inc. Closing on October 31st, there was a sense of urgency to complete the work needed to provide shelter during the coldest months of the year. Construction was undertaken at an accelerated pace and a certificate of occupancy was secured in under two months, on December 19th, at which time RuralEdge handed the project over to NEKCA to provide shelter to those in need. Since then, the shelter has served 47 residents and remained in a perpetual state of full occupancy.

While establishing the shelter has helped to provide for a critical need, doing so is only the first step in tackling the broader challenges of homelessness.

From the outset, RuralEdge and NEKCA had a vision of offering more than just a warm bed and a roof overhead. The shelter is open 24/7 and staffed seven days a week, providing services to residents and connecting them with valuable community resources as they forge a path out of homelessness. From registering for workshops on resume writing and interview skills to finding mental health counseling, shelter staff are there to assist residents in accessing the supports needed to build toward a more hopeful and stable future.

Speaking to RuralEdge staff, residents Samantha Carr and Tim Kidder expressed their appreciation for the positive impact that the shelter and its staff have had on their lives.

“The shelter has not only been a place for me to have a roof over my head, it's helped me find my true passion in life... to help others,” Tim affirmed. “Because of the shelter, I'm working with Jeff Dudley at HireAbility [on my] resume and cover letter so I can hopefully get a full time job being a peer counselor in the near future.”



Residents Samantha Carr and Tim Kidder speak at a ribbon cutting celebrating the opening of the shelter at 72 Moose River Drive.

Tim's partner, Samantha, also praised the shelter for helping them to not fall back into addiction and saving their relationship. **“I was worried that Tim and I would end up getting back into using. So this place kind of saved us... But it also saved our relationship,” Samantha recalled. “We were going through quite a bit when we first got here. Since we worked through all that, our relationship is actually better due to being here.”**

Tim added, **“You can always turn a negative into a positive with the right resources and the right people supporting you [in getting] where you want to be from where you are now.”**

Smiling Faces and Helping Hands:

SASH Assists Residents During Burkeland Lane Renovations



The Farmhouse at Burkeland Lane provides housing to seniors, all of whom were temporarily relocated during renovations.

2023 was an exciting year for the residents at Burkeland Lane in West Burke, VT. The property, previously known as West Burke Housing and Pilgrim Manor, consisted of four buildings: three duplexes offering family units and a multi-unit, renovated farmhouse dedicated to senior housing. Through a phased development plan, RuralEdge was able to fully renovate all four of the existing buildings and add a brand new building with eight general occupancy units. While a resourceful approach to funding, which included securing support from eleven different sources, showcased the intensive efforts of our real estate development department, they were not the only team that went above and beyond in bringing this project to fruition.

In order to renovate the units already established on the property, residents needed to be temporarily



The newly constructed, 8-unit building sits atop the hill alongside three freshly renovated duplexes.

relocated. For many of our elderly residents, some of whom had called the property home for decades, this prospect was the source of significant anxiety. Enter the RuralEdge SASH team.

With their focus on providing support and services at home, the SASH team were ready and eager to assist residents with navigating the emotional and physical challenges that came with transitioning between homes. Having established themselves as a dependable and trustworthy resource to residents, SASH representatives were able to offer reassurance and ease concerns related to the renovation project. Additionally, team members became boots on the ground during the relocation process.

Prior to beginning work on the farmhouse, construction was completed for the new general occupancy building. This provided a convenient solution for temporarily relocating senior residents while their homes were being renovated. During this process, SASH team members were on-site to help pack, move, and unpack belongings for both the relocation to temporary housing and as residents returned to the farmhouse to enjoy their beautifully renovated apartments and community room.



Burkeland Lane resident Shirley John enjoys a visit with RuralEdge SASH coordinator Heather Stahler.

When asked about her relocation experience, longtime resident Shirley John couldn't praise the SASH team's efforts enough.

"They were very helpful with packing and moving," Shirley recalled. "When we moved back down the hill, I opened the door and there was Heather to show us our new apartments. You know, every now and then you need that smiling face she has. Having them around is important, especially when you live in a senior building," she said with a chuckle, "I just keep trying to find reasons to see them".

Affordable Rentals in Short Supply:

VHIP Funds Bring FMR Units to the Northeast Kingdom



Beautifully renovated apartments entered the affordable market at 446 Railroad Street in St. Johnsbury, thanks to VHIP grant funding.

We often take for granted what it means to have a roof over our head. However, Vermonters face a real crisis in finding safe, affordable housing. The rental affordability gap – the difference between the cost of housing and what a household can afford to pay – continues to grow each year. Additionally, there is a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to households with extremely low income (ELI), defined as those whose earnings are at or below 30% of the average median income for the area in which they live. Currently, Vermont is home to over 17,000 ELI renter households, but only has enough rental units considered affordable to this demographic to accommodate 30% of those in need of housing. In short, we need more affordable rental properties in our local communities, and fast!

While no single solution can adequately address this need, there are initiatives in place to help alleviate the crisis to a degree. One such program is the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP), which helps bring new units into the rental market by providing grant funding to Vermont landlords for repairs needed to bring vacant rental units up to code or add new units to an existing building. Additionally, units funded through VHIP directly address the needs of ELI households. For a minimum of five years after a rental unit becomes operational through VHIP grant funding, property owners are

required to maintain rent prices at or below HUD Fair Market rates and must work with Coordinated Entry Lead Organizations to identify suitable tenants exiting homelessness.

To utilize VHIP, a property owner must submit an application to their regional Homeownership Center which, in the Northeast Kingdom, is RuralEdge. Staff from the Homeownership Center at RuralEdge review all submitted VHIP applications and, once approved, are responsible for project oversight throughout the rehabilitation and/or construction of the funded rental properties. Through this process, property owners form a close working relationship with RuralEdge that often sees them returning to apply for more VHIP funding to bring additional rental units into the market.

Jon Poulin, a native Vermonter and owner of multiple rental properties in the Northeast Kingdom, has worked with RuralEdge to fund several rehabilitations through VHIP. His mission is to provide housing that is clean, safe, dependable and, most importantly, affordable. Speaking on behalf of his business, JRP Properties LLC, Jon affirmed the importance of VHIP to Vermont rental property owners.

“With the help of VHIP... we have been able to place six families into wonderful homes that they feel safe, comfortable and they can depend on,” Jon reports, “I believe it is vital to continue this program so that landlords are incentivized to bring their rentals up to code and provide housing to those in need. We have seen nothing but success within this program and RuralEdge has been a wonderful resource along the way.”



Jonathan Poulin, owner of JRP Properties LLC, has worked with RuralEdge to use VHIP funding for multiple unit rehabilitations.

Offering Hope During Hardship: Resident Services Establishes Eviction Prevention Program

Being unable to make ends meet is a common concern for many in the Northeast Kingdom. Local community members find themselves at risk of losing housing because they simply cannot afford to provide for their most fundamental needs. At RuralEdge, we don't want financial hardship to cost anyone the roof over their head.

Resident support specialist Rebecca Bingham has made it her mission to help residents avoid eviction when they are unable to pay rent on time. Building on efforts already in place, Rebecca established an eviction prevention program to offer RuralEdge residents support in bringing their accounts back into good standing when they have fallen behind.

Whenever a resident falls more than thirty days behind on rent, they are referred to Rebecca.

She then helps develop a repayment plan and creates an arrears agreement to pay off the outstanding rent. For those who require an extended period of time to bring their account current, Rebecca connects them with a HUD-certified counselor to offer useful resources and provide financial counseling services.



RuralEdge Resident Support Specialist, Rebecca Bingham

Over a period of six months, Rebecca has managed referrals for 136 households at risk of eviction. Of those referred, 85% worked with Rebecca and either paid off their entire past-due balance or established a long term plan to get caught up.

Kelly, a single mother of two, fell behind on her bills during the financial strain of the holidays. **"Rebecca was nonjudgmental and so helpful," Kelly recalled, "I was able to get caught up and a huge weight was lifted... I appreciate RuralEdge's hard work with eviction prevention so that I have one less thing weighing on me in my day-to-day life."**

It's Everyone's Responsibility: Police Chief Sees Community as a Partner in Public Safety



Newport Chief of Police, Travis Bingham

Vermont has long been admired for its idyllic, small towns and peaceful rural landscapes. However, like anywhere else, the Green Mountain State faces public safety issues and depends on local law enforcement to maintain order.

In 2023, RuralEdge was excited to work with Newport Police Chief Travis Bingham to create a series of videos to educate residents around issues of public safety. Some of his department's greatest concerns are what Bingham refers to as "quality of life crimes," often stemming from the drug trade. These include offenses such as theft, vandalism, and

assaults, which rank among the most frequent cases fielded by the Newport Police Department.

Compounding matters further is the impact of mental health issues on police encounters. Newport PD has turned to community experts at Northeast Kingdom Human Services for assistance. **"We have an employee from NKHS embedded here at the department to respond to calls with," Chief Bingham explains. "It's a huge benefit to the department and to the community to have that instant access to a clinician on scene."**

While trained personnel are always a valuable asset, Bingham also emphasizes the important role of the community in ensuring public safety. **"We rely on community members to make Newport the safest it can be by reporting when something doesn't look right. If you see something, say something is the slogan that's passed around and we definitely encourage and rely on them to do that," he notes, "If we don't know about it, then we're not able to respond or fix it. It's everybody's responsibility; if you want a nice community to live in, then you have to do your part."**

Statement of Activities

	2023	2022 Restated
Revenues		
Rents	4,906,913	4,602,065
Property Management Income	667,429	455,449
Support Services at Home (SASH)	645,054	600,210
Contribution & Grant Income	3,288,541	3,034,924
Forgiveness of Debt	60,169	228,411
Homeownership Fees	27,282	33,364
Interest & Other	248,473	405,693
Development Fees	135,000	325,573
Total Revenue	\$9,978,861	\$9,685,689
Expenses		
Property Management	7,026,794	6,371,550
Support Services at Home (SASH)	618,995	575,491
Management and General	966,959	863,496
Homeownership	341,787	331,316
Development	281,755	269,647
Community Building & Engagement	155,816	121,776
Total Operating Expenses	\$9,392,106	\$8,533,276

Changes in Net Assets from Operations
 Changes from Non-operating Activities
 Net Assets Beginning of Year
 Net Assets at the End of Year

586,755
 120,000
 17,998,273
\$18,705,028

1,152,413
 —
 16,845,860
\$17,998,273



Stairs to lower parking built as part of rehab at Newport's Lakeview Housing



Previously blighted accessory buildings house families exiting homelessness in St. Johnsbur

Statement of Financial Position

	2023	2022 Restated
Current Assets		
Cash - Unrestricted	481,970	989,014
Cash - Restricted	3,524,130	3,944,232
Tenant Security Deposits	182,494	173,074
Accounts Receivable	205,316	86,203
Current Portion Related Party Loans & Deferred Interest Receivable	124,394	—
Prepaid Expenses & Other Current Assets	164,747	143,099
Total Current Assets	\$4,683,051	\$5,335,622
Property & Equipment		
Land and Improvements	4,607,460	4,567,267
Buildings and Improvements	52,232,962	48,579,428
Furniture & Equipment	1,069,883	1,042,150
Construction in Progress	1,402,312	1,380,424
Total before Accumulated Depreciation	59,312,617	55,569,269
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(17,689,056)	(16,214,214)
Total Property & Equipment	\$41,623,561	\$39,355,055
Other Assets		
Related Party Loans & Deferred Interest Receivable	1,377,801	1,130,778
Loans Receivable, Net	207,382	201,420
Investments in Partnerships	241,250	241,250
Other Miscellaneous Assets	55,034	60,075
Total Assets	\$48,188,079	\$46,324,200
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Line of Credit	379,135	161,135
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	905,777	914,981
Tenant Security Deposits	180,660	170,515
Current Portion of Long Term Debt	1,257,524	493,104
Total Current Liabilities	2,723,096	1,739,735
Long Term Debt, Less Current Portion	26,181,393	25,998,513
Deferred Interest	578,562	587,679
Total Liabilities	\$29,483,051	\$28,325,927
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	16,030,603	15,286,356
With Donor Restrictions	2,674,425	2,711,917
Total Net Assets	18,705,028	17,998,273
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$48,188,079	\$46,324,200



1222 Main Street
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819



Join Our Mission

The important work we do wouldn't be possible if not for the generosity of community members like you. Whether you'd like to volunteer at an event or make a monthly financial commitment, we are very grateful for your support. To learn more about our mission and how you can help, visit us online at ruraledge.org/donate

Thank you to the following donors for their contributions in 2023



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