


Food Pantry & Building Renovation NEWS!
 “Thank you!!” to Leland Burdick & Wes Wade




Leland and Wes have been working hard on our recent renovation projects at our 226 Union Street building. These newly designed spaces will house a food pantry that will be utilized by the families that access our services. They have also renovated our gathering spaces that will be used for cooking, dining, support group meetings, family activities, and social networking opportunities for program participants. Sunrise thanks them for their fine craftsmanship and attention to detail!

Mighty Food Farm CSA at Sunrise!
 Sunrise was awarded a grant through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM), and will be participating in a Community Share Agriculture program through Mighty Food Farm, located in Shaftsbury, VT. We are thrilled to be able to bring more fresh, local, produce to the plates of the children and families that we serve through our program offerings.




Sunrise went **BLUE** on April 2, 2021 to show our support for **National Child Abuse Prevention** month. Drive by our Union Street locations to see our pinwheels! If you or someone you know needs help in preventing child abuse, please reach out to Sunrise.

Sunrise is partnering with **Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund** and is one of four menstrual product collection/donation spots in Bennington. "Donate what you can, take what you need."




Sunrise is looking for Board Members! Do you have any fundraising experience? Are you interested in being a part of the Sunrise family? Please contact us!





Sunrise Family Resource Center
 Strengthening Families
 244 Union Street
 Bennington, VT 05201

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Dear Sunrise Community,

Spring has arrived and we are busy at work fulfilling our mission to strengthen families in our vibrant community. Every day, we strive to provide quality services with equity, dignity, and respect, to help our children and families reach their full potential.


In early March, Sunrise formed a self-evaluation team to delve into our practices and policies. This team is composed of a member of our board or directors, a parent involved in our programs, a community partner, and appointed staff. Sunrise created this team to engage with a set of nationally adopted Standards of Quality for Strengthening & Supporting Families. These standards integrate the Principles of Family Support Practice with the Strengthening Families Framework. This framework is research-based, evidence-informed, and encompasses the Strengthening Families five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. During self-examination, our team highlighted our well-rounded benefit package, solid staff supervision policies, and our family centered practices for employees and the families that we work in partnership with. Sunrise is excited about the action steps that we have formulated, thus far. We are eager to complete the evaluation phase, so that we can put the necessary changes into action.

In addition to the improvements we are making to our policies and procedures, we are also undergoing renovations to our physical spaces. We are planning to host an Open House near the end of June, provided that the pandemic circumstances allow for more freedom of movement. Our spring clean-up days are scheduled for Friday, April 23rd, 1-3pm and Saturday, April 24th, 10am-12pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us!

Happy Spring!
 Denise Main
 Executive Director




Learning Together Program (LTP)
 LTP is a state-approved, alternative high school completion (diploma) program, for pregnant or parenting young adults. LTP offers a core curriculum, individualized instruction, and parenting/life skills education.




Sunrise would like to send a big *thank you* to
Mary O'Connell & Family.

LTP Students
 (L) Ivy, (R) Serenity



Mary provided brand new kitchen items for our LTP incentive box. Students may choose an item from the box when they reach a milestone, such as earning subject credit or completing all assignments in a quarter.

Sunrise would like to say, *“thank you!”* to our **LTP Teacher, Jackolyn Houghton,** and her husband, **Jeff,** for all their hard work updating our gathering & learning spaces at 226 Union Street.



LTP students utilized our brand-new kitchen space to prepare a well-rounded meal of chicken parmigiana and a side salad, with help from their LTP Teacher, Jackolyn Houghton.

S P R I N G

Today is a beautiful day.
 The fresh cool warm breeze blows in my face.
 I breathe in the scent of Spring.
 Birds chirping, bees buzzing.
 Spring is in the air.

by **Jamie Clark**
 LTP student





“I honestly have been feeling bad for you; this is starting to feel like I’m a burden to you. I know you don’t think that, but I am so GRATEFUL for you! There is no way I could have done this on my own.” – Mother to a staff member, regarding navigating services for her family and infant child, as a participant in our *Family Advocacy Program*.



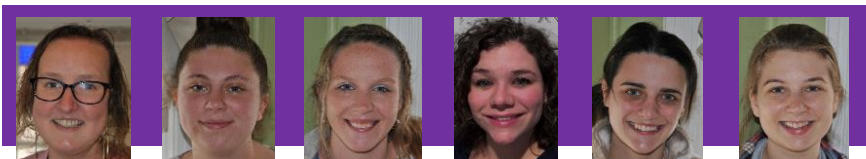
Brothers, Jordan & Jaxon, engage in playtime with their mother, Meghan, during a *home visit* as part of our *Family Advocacy Program*.

“The Sunrise Family Supportive Housing Program helped me and gave me the BEST SUPPORT that I have been given in years. THANK YOU for everything!” – Amie Sanderson participated in our *Family Supportive Housing Program (FSH)*, which reduces the incidence and duration of family homelessness. FSH supports families with minor children that need to transition to and sustain, stable housing. Sunrise offers targeted case management, service coordination, and access to affordable housing.

Sunrise has welcomed new staff since the New Year!

Pictured from left to right:

- Coral O’Connell, CIS Family Support Worker
- McKaleigh Reynolds, Early Care & Education Floater
- Morgan Hewitt, Early Care & Education One’s Teacher
- Sarah Harwood, Grants and Communication Specialist
- Shelby Haynes, Early Care & Education Floater
- Toni Kuzawski, Early Care & Education Two’s Teacher



MISSION: To strengthen families by connecting them with community resources, providing educational experiences, and building relationships that promote independence and resilience.

Sunrise is the fiscal agent for the *Children's Integrated Services (CIS)*. We would like to share a story about a former client case that was open under CIS Early Childhood & Family Mental Health Services (ECFMH). The case has been closed as the child made substantial progress and met his goals. When this child’s case was opened, he struggled to maintain even an hour of self-regulation, and he was in jeopardy of losing his spot in pre-school due to verbal and physical aggression in addition to his inability to interact with both peers and staff in a socially appropriate way. Our case worker, Erin, is so proud of how far he has come! Erin received the email below from the child’s parent, sharing the child’s teacher evaluation:

“I wanted to share the teacher’s evaluation of (child). He has had an amazing year at school. I want to thank you (Erin) for all your help and support.” (Child) is exceeding the standard in all academic areas. He is very focused and always wants to learn more. He is a joy to have in class. He is respectful of adults and classmates, goes out of his way to help them and engages in play nicely. He has a lot of friends and enjoys being with them. (Child) has become much better at "no hands on" and I rarely see this. If I call him out on something, he acknowledges my request and rethinks how he might do something differently. He is almost always happy and excited to be in school.

Sunrise houses the CIS Coordinator, Specialized Child Care Coordinator, & CIS Family Support/ECFMH workers. *CIS services include:* Parenting support | Help during pregnancy & after delivery (e.g., help finding medical care, breastfeeding support & nutrition counseling) | Referrals to appropriate services & service coordination for family & children | Assessment of your child(ren) & family situation | Early Intervention (IDEA Part C) | A nurse/home visitor at a location of your choice (Partnering with the VT Dept. of Health) | Referrals & service coordination | Speech, language, & vision services

Sunrise Strengthens Families – Beginning with Our Own!

Toni Kuzawski and her two-year-old daughter, Hunter, joined our ECE team in December. Toni is a teacher in the Two’s Classroom where Hunter attends. Hunter was diagnosed in utero with tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) which is a genetic disorder that causes tumors to form in many different organs. Early diagnosis and treatment can help overcome developmental delays which is one of the symptoms of TSC.

Hunter has spent time in Albany and Boston hospitals, has attended regular follow up visits, and receives speech and physical therapy. As a result, she is a bit shy of new people and hesitant to be touched. This has made it hard for her to acclimate to her new school and teachers.

Toni shared that the ECE team has worked hard to build relationships with Hunter saying, “At first she wouldn’t even walk through the door and now she walks right up to the teachers! They sing songs and play with horses! These are two of Hunter’s favorite things.”



Early Care & Education Program (ECE)



Guess who came hopping down the bunny trail, all the way to Sunrise?

The *ECE* had a surprise visit from a Spring bunny, (staff member, Carli Scribner). All of the ECE children were extremely excited!

It is sometimes rough for Hunter when the CIS Early Interventionists work with her. Toni said, “The other teachers are great to step in and cover the classroom so I can be ‘mom’ at those difficult times.” Toni said she feels supported at Sunrise and that the ECE staff is phenomenal!

“It is scary when your child has special needs and needs special services,” Toni shared, “but I’d say anybody should take advantage, if it is offered, to give your child the best start.”

