

The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

# VABVI Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022 - June 2023)



# Letter from the Executive Director

In Fiscal Year 2023, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) saw successes across the board. Programs such as SMART, PALS, and IRLE flourished, while we also introduced initiatives such as the New Americans Outreach Project. VABVI participated in many events around the state and beyond. Our signature fundraising event, Dancing with the Burlington Stars, returned to the Flynn for another fabulous show. The Second Century campaign, which commemorates 100 years of VABVI's good work, has been steadily on its way to reaching its goal. 2023 was a wonderful year for VABVI and all its programs. Thank you, as always, for your support!



**Steve Pouliot**  
Executive Director



## Our Mission

The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) was founded in 1926 to enable Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired to be more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life.

# What is VABVI?

VABVI has provided clients with life-changing services for nearly a century.

While we are best known for our direct services, our organization also connects clients to a larger network of resources and additional support. We are proud to both provide services and act as a gateway for our clients as they become more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life.

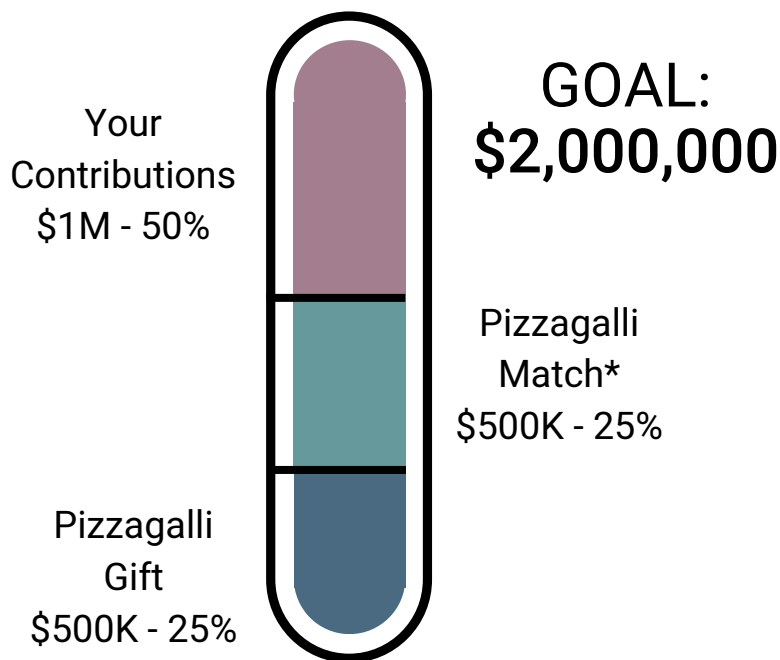
## VABVI Services

- Orientation and Mobility
- Volunteer Transportation
- Adaptive Equipment and Technology
- Peer Assisted Learning and Support (PALS)
- Low Vision Services and Vision Rehab
- SMART (Speech, Magnification, Access, Reading, and Telecommunications) Device Training
- Infant and Toddler Family Service Planning
- IRLE (Intensive Residential Life Experiences) Program
- HAPI (Helping Adolescents Prepare for Independence) Program
- Partners with LEAP (Learn, Earn, Prosper) Program
- Special Education
- Provides professional support to Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) clients
- Refers clients to the ABLE Library for large print, electronic, braille, and audio books

# Second Century Campaign

VABVI has provided clients with life-changing services for nearly a century. While we are best known for our direct services, our organization also connects clients to a larger network of resources and additional support. We are proud to both provide services and act as a gateway for our clients as they become more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life.

Thanks to a generous \$500K donation from the Pizzagalli Family Foundation [PFF], longtime friend of VABVI and the SMART Device Training Program, we are already one-quarter of the way to permanent funding for SMART. Additionally, the PFF has offered a matching gift opportunity. For every \$2 raised by VABVI for the campaign, the PFF will contribute \$1, with additional funds up to \$500K.



As of December 2023, the Second Century Campaign has raised a total of \$791,526.80. Thank you to all donors for supporting our important services! The Second Century Fund's goal is within our reach, and every contribution brings us closer to permanent funding for SMART. Please consider supporting our services today!

\* Maximum Possible Gift



# Adult Services

In FY23, VABVI gave presentations on our adult services in many locations throughout the state, including assistive living facilities, churches, public libraries, rotaries, SASH VT(Support and Services at Home), and NH's Futures in Sight at the Aging Resource Center (ARC) in Dartmouth.

The annual Technology Fair was held in April at Montpelier's Capital Plaza. There were over 100 people in attendance. Vendors included Eschenbach and New England Low Vision and Adaptavision. VABVI partnered with DBVI's Great Expectations workshop, and breakout sessions addressed the challenges in the post-Covid world.

A proclamation was submitted to the Governor to recognize the week of April 14th as VRTA appreciation week. It was signed and released to the media. Vermont and Michigan were the only states to obtain a signed proclamation.

Vermont Public Radio interviewed Dan and VRT Julia Soleau on older Vermonters and the use of technology for visual impairments. [You can listen to the show by clicking this text.](#)

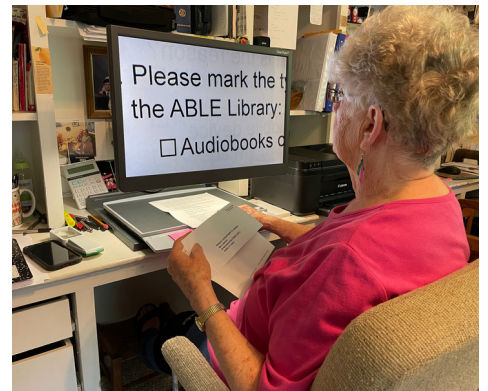
FY23 also saw an increase in the number of doctor referrals that VABVI has reached, including a new low-vision specialist in White River Junction.



Dan Norris tables for VABVI Adult Services at the Tech Fair.



Julia Soleau assists SMART client Janet Keck.



A SMART client demonstrates her use of technology.

# Children's Services

New referrals to Childrens Services surpassed the pre-pandemic levels in FY23. There were 39 new referrals over the year.

IRLE camp took place June 21-23 at Burlington's Rock Point School. VABVI collaborated with VT Adaptive Sports to get the campers sailing, biking, and kayaking. The VABVI staff also organized these additional events: bowling, rock climbing, swimming, making campfires, socializing with peers, cooking their own food and engaging in a career readiness activities. 14 students attended IRLE camp in FY23.

There were three options this year for the summer LEAP (Learn, Earn and Prosper) job training program: virtual, in-person residential or work in their own community. LEAP is run by ReSource and DBVI with VABVI acting as consultants. VABVI identified 22 potential students to participate in the LEAP summer employment program for ages 14-22.



An IRLE camper uses a white cane.



Timeka Giroux graduates high school with a Braille cap.



Stephanie Bissonette tables at a conference.

# Children's Services

Hope Watson, TVI and Statewide Consultant for Neurological Visual Impairment won the 2023 Gold Apple Individual Award from the VT Council of Special Education Administrators. Additionally, 8 VABVI awards were given out to a few school staff members and teams for their outstanding educational support to students with a visual impairment.

Alison Hampson, TVI, tested a new and unique digital tactile device from APH called the Monarch. It will allow someone to read a whole page of digital braille and/or have tactile graphics on the same screen. It is the first device to have 32 cells by ten lines on one page.

Stephanie Bissonette, Director of Children Services, TVI and COMS, created a webinar for The Vermont Family Network titled: "Services for Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, What can VABVI Provide for my Child?" and a first-time in-service for the Vermont State School Association and Pediatric Nurses.

Allie Fuddy sparked an outreach effort by VABVI to provide vision screenings to New Americans living in Chittenden County.



A client uses the Monarch digital Braille reading device.



# Events in FY23

## Intensive Residential Life Experience (IRLE)

June 21-23, 2023 • Rock Point School, Burlington

IRLE is a fun, instructional camp that intertwines recreation and socializing with peers with lessons and experience in practical needs for independent living and future employment. VABVI collaborated with VT Adaptive Sports to get the campers sailing, biking, and kayaking. Campers also enjoyed bowling, rock climbing, swimming, making campfires, socializing with peers, cooking their own food and engaging in a career readiness activities. 14 students attended. The IRLE camp was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Freeman Foundation and DBVI.

## Dancing with the Burlington Stars

September 17, 2023 • The Flynn, Burlington

VABVI's signature fundraising event took place on September 17th, 2023 at the Flynn and was a shining success! Congratulations to winners Doug DiSabito and Liza Matton Mercy and runners-up Rose Bedard and Heather Leibenguth, as well as all who participated and attended. Next year's event will take place on September 14 2024, and the official Reveal Party is on May 5th, 2024!

## White Cane Awareness Day

October 15, 2023

VABVI partnered with DBVI to hold White Cane Awareness Day events in Brattleboro, Rutland, Burlington, Barre, Lyndonville, and St. Albans. All the events are designed to increase awareness of people who have visual impairments in the community. In 2024, we celebrate the 60th anniversary of WCD.



An IRLE camper kayaks on Lake Champlain.



DWTBS participants pose onstage at the Flynn.



A White Cane Day participant crosses the street.



# Events in FY23

## New American Vision Screenings

For some Vermonters, cultural and language barriers prevent them from knowing about or easily accessing VABVI's services. To bridge that gap, VABVI partnered with the City of Burlington, UVMHC, Building Bright Futures, the Lions Club, and the JustServe.org charity to hold vision screenings for five New American communities in Chittenden Cty: Somali-Bantu, Nepalese, Congolese, Vietnamese and Burundian. As of this writing, the first screening has been conducted and was a great success! There were 31 attendees, 28 participants in eye screening and 11 were identified with impaired vision that can be corrected with glasses, 2 individuals had cataracts that prevented their screening, and one individual was found to have a vision issue that needed immediate attention from an eye doctor.

## Accessibility Project

This project began in the spring of 2021. The first project milestone, the installation of a tactile sign created for Waterfront Park, is being created out of state and will soon be delivered to Burlington. A grand opening installation event will be held in the spring of 2024. A Leadership Champlain team completed an accessibility analysis of Waterfront and Oakledge Parks, and turned over their report to the City of Burlington. At the request of the City of Burlington, a second Leadership Champlain team was formed to conduct an accessibility analysis for Church Street. The UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources has joined the project with a 6 person student team creating a soundscape tour of the waterfront to be completed in the Spring of 2024.

Our mission is to enable Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired to be more independent, cultivate adaptive skills and improve their quality of life.

များကို ပိုမိုလွတ်လပ်စွာနေထိုင်နိုင်စေရန်၊ လိုက်လျောညီထွေရှိသောစွမ်းရည်များကို မွေးမြူရန်နှင့် ၎င်းတို့၏ဘဝအရည်အသွေးကို မြှင့်တင်ရန်ဖြစ်သည်။

Naša misija je omogućiti slijepim ili slabovidnim stanovnicima Vermonta da budu nezavisniji, neguju adaptivne vještine i poboljšaju kvalitet svog života.

Notre mission est de permettre aux Vermontois aveugles ou malvoyants d'être plus indépendants, de cultiver des capacités d'adaptation et d'améliorer leur qualité de vie.

Hadafkayagu waa inaan u suurtagelino dadka reer Vermont ee indhoolayaasha ah ama aragga naafada ka ah, inay noqdaan kuwo madax-banaan, kobciyaan xirfadaha la qabsiga oo ay horumariyaan tayada noloshooda.

Dhamira yetu ni kuwawezesha Vermonters ambao ni vipofu au walemavu wa macho, kujitegemea zaidi, kukuza ujuzi wa kukabiliana na kuboresha ubora wa maisha yao.

Nhiệm vụ của chúng tôi là giúp những người Vermont bị mù hoặc khiếm thị trở nên độc lập hơn, trau dồi các kỹ năng thích ứng và cải thiện chất lượng cuộc sống của họ.

جمعية فيرمونت للمكفوفين والمعاقين بصرياً هي تمكين سكان فيرمونت من ذوي البصر من أن يكونوا أكثر استقلالية، وتنمية مهارات التكيف وتحسين نوعية حياتهم.

A sign listing VABVI's mission statement in several languages commonly used by Vermont's New Americans.

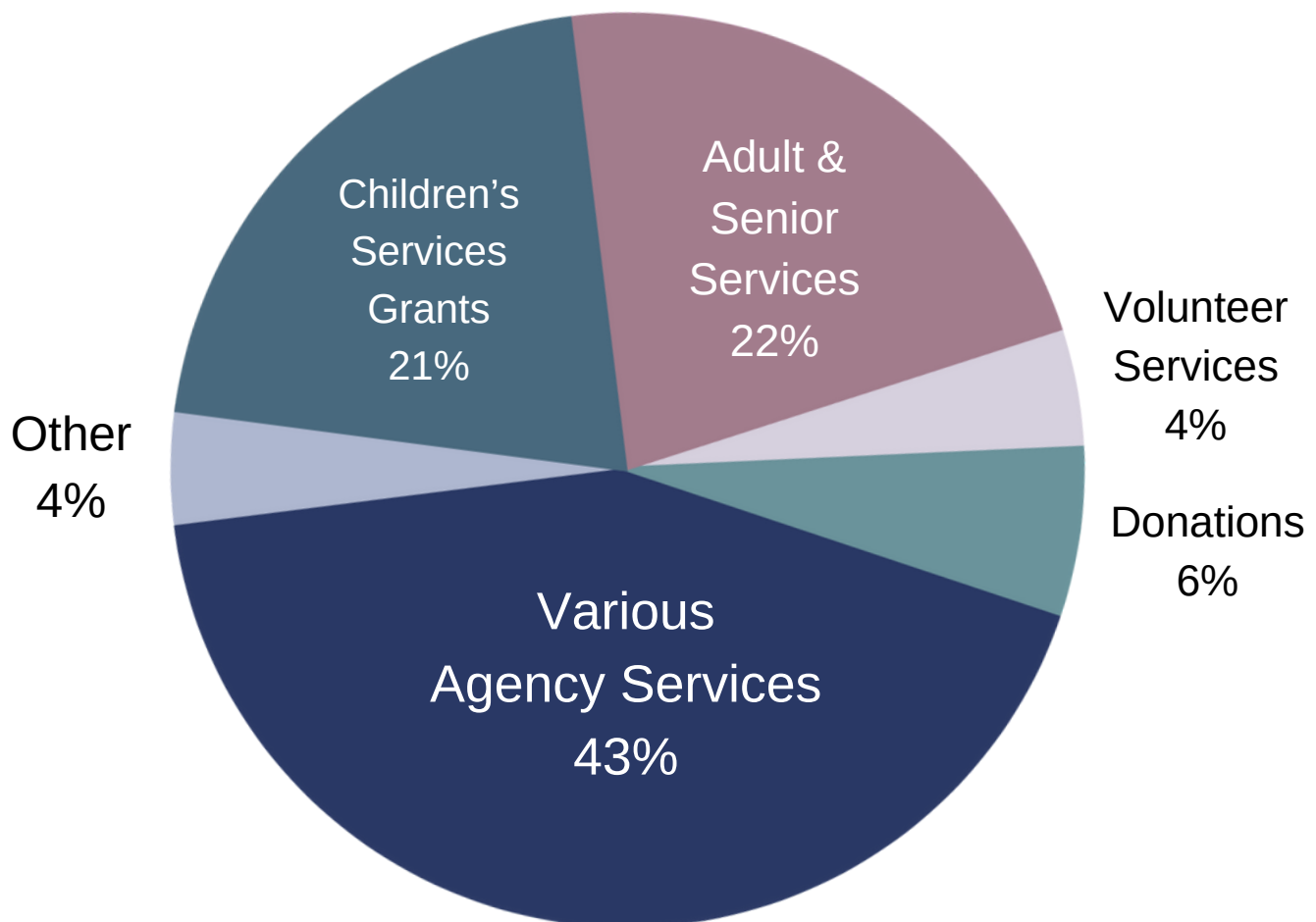


An illustration of the Accessibility Project's Waterfront sign.

# Revenue

Note: Financial information shown below represents unaudited results.

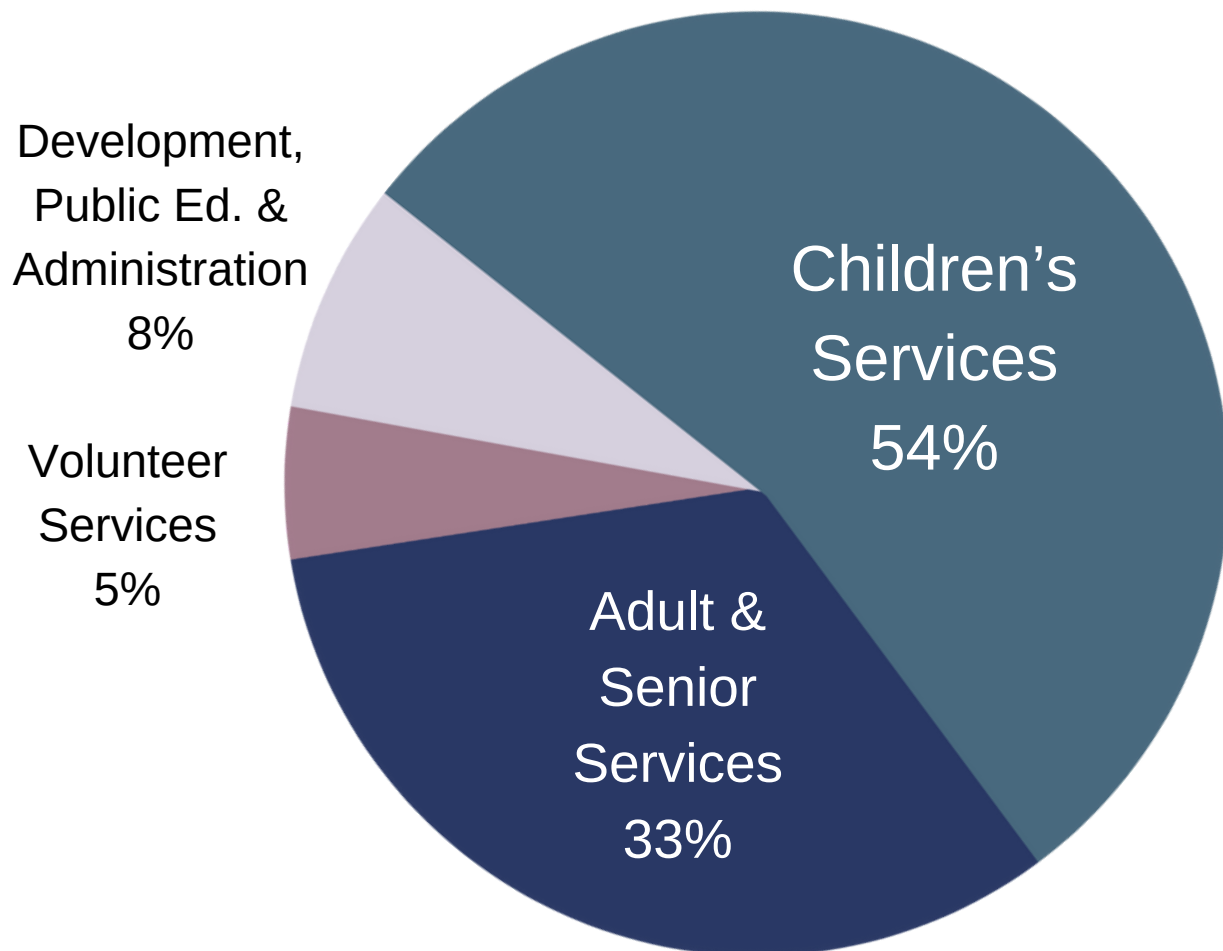
Children's Services Grants	\$675,609
Adult & Senior Services	\$720,000
Volunteer Services	\$121,249
Donations	\$186,195
Various Agency Services	\$1,371,347
Other	\$130,043
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,204,443</b>



# Expenses

Note: Financial information shown below represents unaudited results.

Children's Services	\$1,785,471
Adult & Senior Services	\$1,072,317
Volunteer Services	\$173,401
Development, Public Ed. & Administration	\$262,029
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,293,218</b>





# Get Connected

[www.vabvi.org](http://www.vabvi.org) • [general@vabvi.org](mailto:general@vabvi.org)

VABVI will provide services to any Vermonter. From infants to seniors, anyone directly experiencing or connected to a person experiencing vision loss can contact us for information and assistance.



@vabvi802



@\_VABVI



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#### South Burlington

60 Kimball Ave  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
(802) 863-1358

#### Rutland

1 Scale Ave, Ste 117 #18  
Rutland, VT 05701  
(802) 775-6452

#### Brattleboro

130 Austine Dr, Ste 280  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
(802) 254-8761

#### Berlin

13 Overlook Dr, Ste 1  
Berlin, VT 05641  
(802) 505-4006

## Support Our Services

### Online Giving

Online donations allow donors a hassle-free process and the knowledge that donations are put to work immediately.

**It's easy to donate online.**

1. Visit our simple, secure online donation form at [www.vabvi.org/make-a-donation/](http://www.vabvi.org/make-a-donation/)
2. Select the "Donate Here" option.
3. Choose your amount. Every dollar helps.
4. Provide your contact information, payment method, and any optional details.

### Leave Your Legacy

Many of our supporters have discovered that with a little planning, you don't need to be wealthy to make a profound difference to VABVI's mission. We're here to help you explore the various donation methods to ensure your future gift is tax effective and takes your family's needs into consideration. For more information on making VABVI a beneficiary in your will, please visit <http://vabvi.org/planned-giving/> or call John Thomas at (802) 863-1358 Ext. 224

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Christopher Trapeni  
Conan Trombly  
Vickie Trombly  
Jane C. Trono  
Troy Area Lions Club  
Dorothy Tucker  
Richard Turner  
Sandra Twombly  
Tyler Place  
United Church of Bellows  
Falls  
Casimir Vaicaitis  
Valley Lions Club  
Lucy Van Doorn  
Karen Vastine  
Amy Vaughan  
VELCO  
Lisa Velez  
Jess Veltkamp  
Bruce T. Venner  
Vergennes Lions Club  
Jennifer Verhelst

Vermont Eastern Star  
Home, Inc.  
Richard Vincent  
Christian Vogt  
Pearl Von York  
Kelley Walker  
Daniel Walsh  
Karin Ward  
Duncan Wardwell  
Denise Watson  
Marsha Watson  
Joseph Welch  
Nicholas Welsh  
Roberta Wermer  
Leo Wermer  
Susan Westin  
Kittie Weston-Knauer  
Katherine Whalen  
Linda Whalen  
Gail Wheeler  
Barbara White  
Cynthia White  
White River Lodge #90  
Linus Wiles  
Susan & Duncan Wilkie  
Judy & Thomas Williams  
Ashley Williams  
Susan Wilson  
Jonathan Winer  
Rebecca Winokur  
Gordon Winters  
Martin & Vivian Wisda  
C.F. Witherell  
Women's Fellowship  
Elizabeth Woods  
Ruth Woodside  
Sandra Wright  
William Wright  
Gail Wysocki  
Kathryn Yawney  
Arlene Young  
Joe Young  
Melanie Young  
Donald Zilch  
Cyndi Zook

## \$501 - \$1000

Dedrick Casab  
Cooper Insurance Services  
Wayne & Sirisha Hawley  
Elizabeth Hazen  
Jean Henry  
Dennis & Pamela Jones  
James Kamitses  
Lawrence King  
Marilyn McQuaide  
Frank Melendy  
Melissa Neun  
Norwich Lions Club  
James Pizzagalli  
Jeffrey Scroeder  
Fred G. Smith  
Heidi Tappan  
Hilaire Thomas  
Krystyna Tuckerman  
Elise Widlund  
WowToyz

## \$1001-5000

Jay Barton  
Andrew Bessy  
William A. Catto  
Community National Bank  
Patricia Emery  
Joseph Guertin  
Norman Hanson  
Gerry and Chryl Martin  
Lynn Miles  
Sandra O'Brien  
Penny Peterson  
Steven P. Pouliot  
Peter E. Shumlin  
Elizabeth Steele  
John Thomas  
Carl Wermer

## \$5000+

Stephen A. Feltus  
Marion Mueller

## Towns

Brattleboro  
Brookline  
Cambridge  
Castleton  
Charlotte  
City of Barre  
Clarendon  
Craftsbury  
Eden  
Essex  
Fairfax  
Fairlee  
Fayston  
Glover  
Goshen  
Granville  
Guildhall  
Hartford  
Highgate  
Jay  
Lowell  
Manchester  
Marshfield  
Middlesex  
Middletown Springs  
Montpelier  
Moretown  
Mt. Holly  
Northfield  
Pawlet  
Peacham  
Poultney  
Randolph  
Readsboro  
Richford  
Roxbury  
Sharon  
Shelburne  
Sheldon  
St. Johnsbury  
Starksboro  
Stowe  
Tunbridge  
Underhill  
Waitsfield  
Weathersfield  
Wells  
Williston

# FY23 Donors

Thank you to the generous donors who make our services possible.

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Special People in Need (SPIN)  
The Blackburn Giving Fund  
The Byrne Foundation  
VT Community Health Equity  
Partnership  
Walter Cerf Community Fund

## FY23 Statistics

VABVI provided services to 194  
children and 889 adults  
in Fiscal Year 2023.

48

towns and  
cities  
supported  
VABVI with in  
FY23.

72

volunteers  
donated  
services to  
VABVI  
clients.

42

clients  
participated  
in PALS  
groups across  
8 counties  
in Vermont.

499

tickets sold to  
Dancing with  
the Burlington  
Stars.