

Rockingham Help & Helpers

June 23, 2020

Overview

The story of Rockingham Help & Helpers is similar to the many mutual aid groups that emerged in mid-March in response to Covid-19, but it is OUR story and therefore important to share.

The beginning happened so quickly and efficiently due to the presence of Sustainable Rockingham within our community. Within a couple of days of the stay-at-home order, a small group of community members was approached by Laurel Green of Sustainable Rockingham and then expanded to include individuals from the Town of Rockingham, the Rockingham Free Public Library, Our Place and Greater Falls Connections.



Sustainable Rockingham was established as a result of “Let’s Take Action Rockingham” community visit facilitated by the VT Council on Rural Development. Members of Sustainable Rockingham recognized a need for a local response to the stay-at-home order and using resources from other communities and mutual aid organizations, designed a survey to identify individuals and families who had immediate or anticipated needs including food insecurity, isolation and the unknown. At the same time, it was essential to identify the resources that could help, which included community volunteers and organizations.

What followed organizationally is described in our latest “Phases” document (attached). Our constant focus was on identifying gaps as they emerged and creating connections with local organizations. A small “huddle” group met daily to respond quickly and nimbly to the changing circumstances. Our larger and expanding group met weekly with continual reach out and involvement of local organizations and individuals.

Some folks we have helped have been a part of the ongoing system of support in our community but were faced with additional challenges because of the pandemic in terms of accessing those resources. Many were asking for help for the first time specifically because their situation changed so radically. Our effort to make it possible for people to stay home in order to keep themselves and all of us safe from Covid-19 underlined all of our efforts.

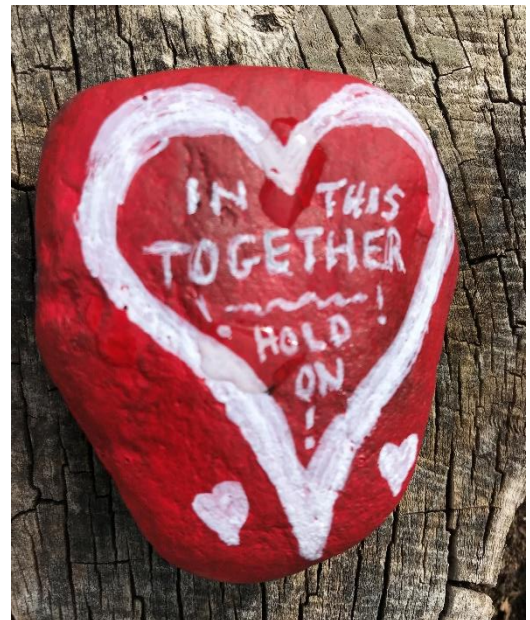
Perhaps, most importantly, we now have a structure that now includes community members and active participation from organizations who do this important work all the time. Rockingham Free Public Library has been essential in helping get information out, and supporting all of the technological issues we faced; Greater Falls Connections has provided leadership oversight and managed our financial donations; Our Place has been our key partner in getting food to people; Parks Place, SEVCA, WNESU, and most recently Building Bright Futures, for child care needs---our ongoing concern for the summer.

The support of the Town of Rockingham was key to our success: Gary Fox's availability, skills, and caring have been essential. The Waypoint, our home place, was perfect for drop off and pick up of supplies; the Rockingham Library commitment by assigning Sam Maskell to help us, in order to distribute the survey among many other things was indispensable.

We are grateful that the needs have dropped as folks are able to get what they need through family, friends and going out themselves. We are committed to stay poised to identify and respond to whatever crisis comes up next.

Respectfully for Rockingham Help & Helpers,

Laurel Green, Sustainable Rockingham
Leslie Goldman, Community Member
Lyn Parker Haas, Sustainable Rockingham
Deb Witkus, Greater Falls Connections
Laura Schairbaum, Greater Falls Connections
Sam Maskell, Rockingham Public Library
Diana Jones, Community Member
Gary Fox, Town of Rockingham
Amy Howlett, Community Member
Kathy Leo, Community Member
Lisa Pitcher, Our Place
Sarah Campbell, Our Place
Megan Applegate, Parks Place



Rockingham Help & Helpers

MARCH - JUNE 2020

VOLUNTEERS

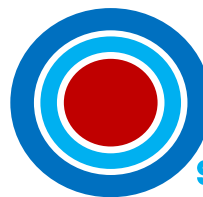
We identified **162** volunteers willing to help their community



24 volunteers made deliveries to **68 households** (multiple times) *in coordination with Our Place and Parks Place.*

THE CALLING CREW

Every Monday, 5 volunteers called anyone who had responded with a need.



PRIMARY NEEDS included food, hygiene supplies, diapers, and pet food

SECONDARY NEEDS a friendly check-in and help with referrals and accessing services

GAPS AND EMERGENCY NEEDS

Some people had needs which aren't met by existing organizations or emergency needs that needed immediate help. Using our resources, we provided that assistance.



Our Place Drop-In Center and Parks Place Community Resource Center have been essential partners in our efforts as we supported and aided their services to help meet needs.



DONATIONS

The community donated food, supplies, prepared meals, and money to support our efforts.



MASKS

Distributed mask-making supplies and created a mask-making team which made and distributed **OVER 300 FREE MASKS** throughout Bellows Falls and Saxtons River.

WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE?



The ages of those with needs ranged from infants to the elderly,



from large households to small,



and from those who have received help before and many who were seeking it for the first time.

