



# Annual Report 2019

## Northeast Kingdom Community Action

70 Main St, Newport, VT 05855

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## Message from Executive Director

2019 brought renewed excitement and energy to our mission of empowering all generations in the Northeast Kingdom. Our 10 Head Start programs throughout Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties continue to increase young children's skills and prepare them for a successful entry into elementary school. Not only do families find a stable, caring environment for their children to learn in, they also have access to our many services by bring their children to the centers. Similarly, in our outreach offices in St. Johnsbury, Newport, Canaan and Island Pond, clients don't just receive one service. We welcome our neighbors and community members in and see the complexity of their challenges, meet them where they are and provide integrated services. Seeing and hearing people with compassion is the cornerstone of NEKCA's success. This year we matched our warming shelter with transport to a NEKCA sponsored community center, allowing shelter residents a place to stay warm, access services and continue human interaction after the shelter has closed in the morning. We continued our varied community workshops and events, ranging from teaching dads to do their daughters' hair, to creating LGBTQ+ inclusive community environments and partnering with local schools to provide meals. The generosity of private sector and public sector community leaders have helped provide us with funding to support all of these wonderful programs and more. I am humbled daily at how wonderful it is to work in a community where so many leaders have compassion and understanding. Thank you for the continued financial and human-energy support.

## NEKCA Leadership and Board of Directors

### Senior Management Team

**Jenna O'Farrell**, Executive Director

**Stephanie Bowen**, Director of Community & Justice, Community Based Corrections, and Youth Services Programs

**Stephanie Tetreault**, Co-Director of the NEKCA Head Start program

**Kellie Tarryk**, Co-Director of the NEKCA Head Start program

**Joy Ely**, Director of NEKCA South Services, St Johnsbury

**Kristi Hatley**, Director of NEKCA North Services, Newport

**Amy Robinson**, Director of the Micro Business Development Program

**Amy Burbo**, Director of Human Resources

### Board of Directors

**Martha Hill**, Chair

**Brian Keith**, Vice Chair

**Linda Gochie**, Treasurer

**Nancy Fried**, Secretary

**Leslie Nelson**

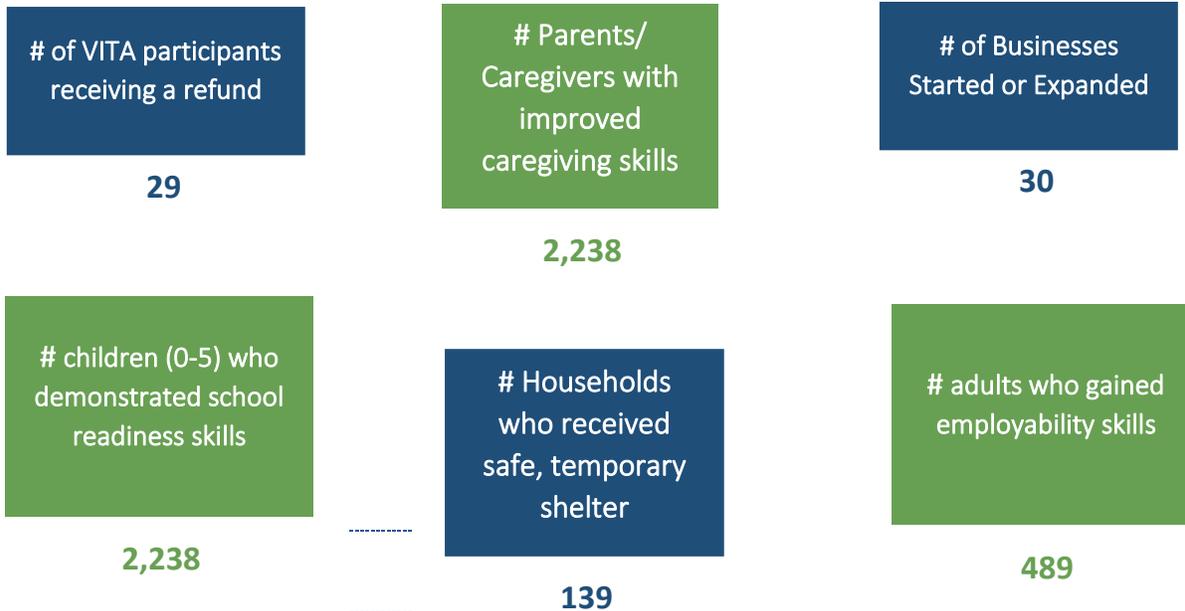
**Ellen Stanley**

**Maurice Jacobs**

**Deborah Lee**

**Kelli Kazmarski**

# NEKCA 2019 Impact by the Numbers



## Micro-Business Development Program Outcomes

**Number of Participants Served**  
88

**Number of New Participants**  
23

**Number of Businesses Started**  
7

**Number of Business Expansions**  
10

**Number of Business Enhancements**  
26

**Number of Jobs Created**  
5.5

# 2019 Program Successes

## *Compassionate Crisis Assistance: Integrated Shelter Support*

A homeless man from Massachusetts somehow ended up at the NEKCA warming shelter deep in the winter months. He had been banned from multiple other shelters due to safety issues...or as NEKCA staff saw it....he was constantly in crisis mode. Without a place to rest his head, without the consistency of safely being able to store his belongings at night while he tried to sleep, without knowing where or when his next meal would come, he couldn't shake the constant anxiety and fear. When he arrived at the warming shelter, NEKCA staff listened to his story, provided food and welcomed him to spend the night in the 10 bed shelter. While the journey to stability was not a straight path, this gentleman found a safe, consistent place to sleep each night matched with warm and nutritious meals. Slowly, he moved towards stability, journeying to the newly opened community center each day to interact with NEKCA staff and other community members. When the NEKCA staff who initially welcomed him to the shelter saw him 15 days later, she said he was a whole new person. He is now putting together a plan for long term support. While he knows this path will be equally challenging, he is grateful for the dignified support he has received....so much so that he volunteers at the warming shelter and community center. He can now be found sweeping floors, serving food or giving back in other ways while he continues down a much more stable path.



## *Dignity and Compassion: Finding a Supportive Path through Parent Child Centers*



A family withered with travel showed up on the doorstep of the St Johnsbury PCC telling stories of a journey that started somewhere in the southern part of the US and passed through Barre. NEKCA staff welcomed them in, offered them a place to rest and tell their story. As the mother rested with her eyes closed, NEKCA staff provided food to the children and found them a safe place to lay their heads. After a night's rest without having to flee or stay awake to ensure the safety of her children, mom was able to work with NEKCA and our community partners to assess her family's needs – food, shelter, education, stability and a place to start over. Based on her priority of getting her children into school or early childhood education programs, NEKCA was able to register the youngest child into the Head Start program and enroll the older children with the local public schools. Knowing her children were safe and able to continue their education put mom more at ease. She was able to focus on

finding more permanent shelter in the northern region of NEKCA's coverage area. The family had a gentle hand off between NEKCA staff who supported the children's transfer between schools and Headstart locations. Without NEKCA's strong relationships with community partners, like Umbrella, the Sheriff's Department, the public school district, and DCF, the rapid assessment and placement into safety might not have happened for this family. Focusing on the stated needs from the mom put her at ease as solutions were jointly put into place, allowing her to move out of crisis into a state in which she can focus on improving elevating her families' situation.

## *ASPIRE! – Empowering Female Entrepreneurs*

ASPIRE! is a program within the Micro Business Development Department of NEKCA. ASPIRE! aims to increase the prosperity of the Northeast Kingdom by offering business technical assistance and educational opportunities to female owned businesses.

Recently, the Micro Business Development Program offered three "Circle of Support" networking sessions which included women from all three counties. These events were hosted by the Grindstone Café in Lyndonville and were sponsored by the Passumpsic Savings Bank. In addition to the peer support and networking one business was chosen from each county to receive a \$500.00 business award. Congratulations to:

*Val Elliott-Caledonia County  
Janet McKenzie-Essex County  
Penny Jensen -Orleans County*



*"I am very grateful for this opportunity, which has given me the ability to take the vital steps to beginning my dream business and has also instilled the empowering energy within me to continue growing and expanding."*

*~Michelle Berry, Journey Within Equine Healing*

## *The Prosperity Fund*

### *NEKCA's Micro Business Development Program Chosen as First Pilot Project*

**The NEK Prosperity Fund** has been created as a result of work by **NEK Prosper!**, the Accountable Health Community of Caledonia & southern Essex Counties. **NEK Prosper!** is a coalition of the leading health, social service, housing, educational, governmental, and cultural organizations and institutions in the southern half of the Northeast Kingdom, an area that is encompassed by the service area of Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital. **NEK Prosper!** has adopted the following vision statement to guide its work:

*Our members are committed to our shared goal of improving the health and well-being of the people in Caledonia and southern Essex Counties by integrating our efforts and services with an emphasis on reducing poverty in our region.*

**To hear their stories, please click the link to see the Prosperity Fund Video:**

<http://www.katv.org/vod/studio/2019/nekca082119>

## *Achieving a Seemingly Impossible Dream: GED Graduation*

Looking back, a recent graduate of the GED program reflected on the numerous ways NEKCA supported her determination to improve her situation in support of her kids. Her interaction with NEKCA began with enrolling her young daughter in at Head Start. Dropping her off each day, this graduate was exposed to other NEKCA programs, like the Grow Your Business and GED prep and registration. Having been homeschooled, she didn't complete her high school education. Raising a kid was tough, especially with the low salaries she was able to get, if, and when, she could find employment. She never thought she could get her GED but decided to take a chance since the prep courses were run by NEKCA....and organization she trusted. After studying hard, providing an amazing role model for her daughter, she took the GED and passed! She is now working to build her administrative skills with hopes of finding an administrative job to support herself and her daughter.



## *Family Support: Getting a child ready for school*



The family support childcare subsidy program exists to help families who are experiencing some sort of stress, such as illness, death in the family, domestic violence, homelessness, or even a developmental delay. The program helps families by providing childcare for a year, allowing the children to access safe, stable care as well as receive any services and support they may need. In this particular successful case, the family only qualified for a small amount of regular assistance but could not afford it. The child needed early intervention services and socialization in childcare in order to be ready for school, so the family support program was a perfect solution. At the end of the year we checked in with the family to see how everything had gone, and the child is successfully attending preschool and the family is receiving all the supports they are needing.

*With the help of NEKCA, the VA, and the State of Vermont, Tom from Island Pond has gotten stable housing close to his doctor's offices. On his last visit with me, Tom could not thank NEKCA enough for all that they have done to help him.*



## *Integrated Family Financial Support*

A young woman came to NEKCA after getting behind on bills due to unexpected car maintenance. As it was the holiday season, she was distraught over being behind on bills, as well as not being able to get a Christmas present for her kids. As the sole income provider for her family, she was grasping at straws to find a solution for her kids, husband and herself even though she already had a plan. She just needed a small infusion of help to achieve her plan. She knew she would receive three paychecks in January, yet with no credit, she couldn't use future income to buy Christmas gifts and pay bills now. Together, NEKCA supported her - she would pay 1/3 of the outstanding bills, and NEKCA would pay the rest. As a hard worker, she was persistent, keeping her appointments and following the plan. She was utterly grateful to NEKCA for giving her a chance, especially during the holiday season.

## *Transitional Housing: Correctional Facility to a Correct Path*

Marie Dash entered NEKCA's Aerie House, Transitional Housing Program with a long history within corrections. Marie has been in and out corrections facilities for six (6) years dealing with anger issues, substance abuse issues, mental health issues and lack of support within her family and community. Marie would always self-sabotage her success by violating her probation or furlough with a new charge or relapsing on illegal substances within three (3) months of her release from a correctional facility.

This was actually Marie's second time at Aerie House. The first time Marie chose not to follow the rules and relapsed and was removed and placed back into the correctional facility.

Marie chose to take a different approach this time around. Marie made the decision to follow the rules, access the services that staff at Aerie House had to offer, access and attend her weekly meetings with clinicians and access community resources so as to have a connection when she transitioned into the community.

Marie came into the program in July 2017 with a better attitude and a willingness to change. Marie sat with staff to go over all the opportunities and supports staff could offer her while she was in the program. Marie met with staff on a daily basis to start her day off on a positive note, but also to go over her coping skills to use throughout the day. Through this daily contact and support Marie maintained for her nine (9) month commitment to the program without any relapses, suspensions or dismissals from the program. Marie then successfully transitioned into her own apartment in March 2018, with the ability to access the community resources and to know she can succeed in life. It was a very successful transition for Marie to feel independent, but also to know she has skills and support from the program to back her up. To this day Marie has not returned to the correctional facility, violated her conditions of furlough or incurred new charges. Marie continuously maintains contact with program staff for support and conversation.

# Financials

