

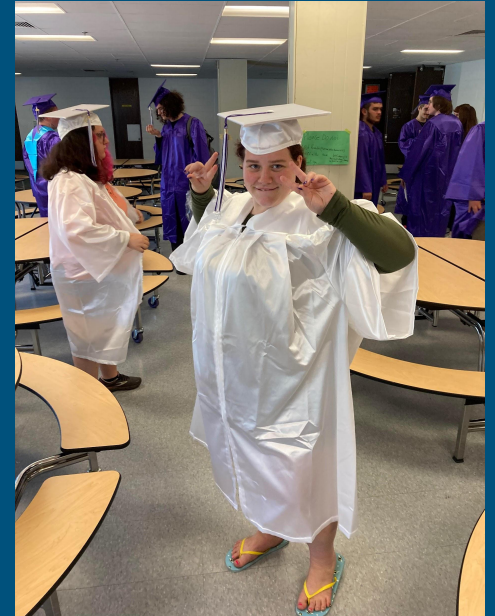
Friends For Change

Youth Center of Bellows Falls



Project Goal

- Build transformative relationships with most impacted young people and their families.
- Implement research-informed strategies to promote protective factors and reduce risk factors.
- Provide a safe space for connection, belonging, to heal some of the root causes of substance misuse..



Focus Areas

(filling in the gaps)

Transition-aged youth

- Focus on homeless and disabled 16-24
- Dropped out/Unenrolled youth
- Life skills building
- Social connections and peer support

Highschool programming

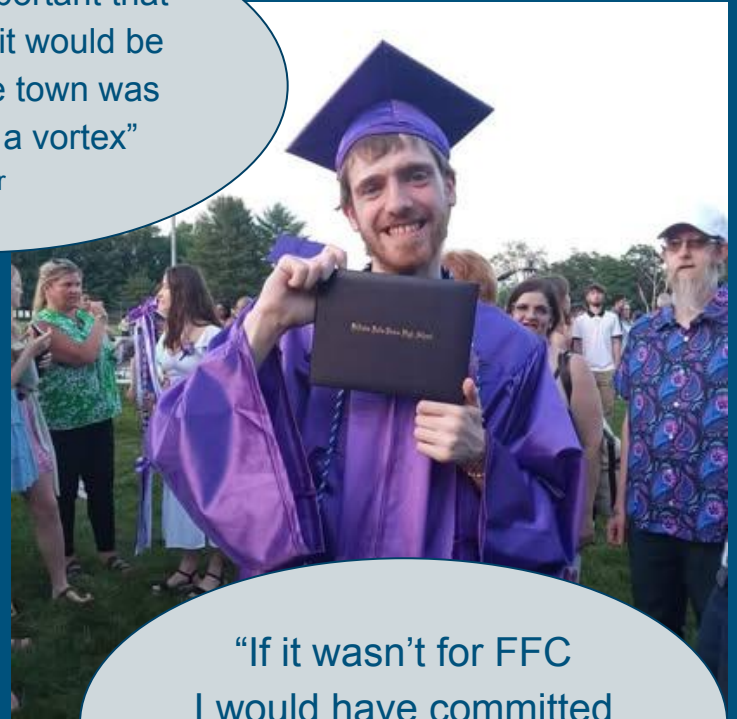
- Mental health support
- Workforce skill building (soft skills)
- Opportunities for community building
- Self- advocacy skills and Creative expression

Equity bridging

- Trauma-Informed resource connection
- Relationships are the intervention
- Filling in gaps when needed

“It feels so important that without FFC, it would be like the whole town was sucked into a vortex”

- Highschool senior



“If it wasn’t for FFC I would have committed suicide”

- young adult

Identified Need- Data

Windham County:

27% of high school students currently use cannabis, which is significantly higher than VT (2023 YRBS).

24% of high school students currently use alcohol (2023 YRBS).

22% of LGBTQ+ and 9% of HetCis high school students did not go to school because they felt unsafe, compared to 9% statewide.

More females and LGBTQ+ high schoolers reported their mental health was most of the time or always not good and that they felt sad or hopeless (*surpassing every county*).

21.8 per 100,00 Deaths due to Opioid use

Southeast Vermont:

41.9% of youth under 12 were living in poverty.**as many young people are in out-of-home custody as other parts of the region.**

Bellows Falls Union High School:

45.36% of students are considered low income based on free and reduced lunch.*



Participants Identified Needs -

Friends for Change Demographics: (45 participants Aged 11-24)

- 11% BIPOC
- 24% LGBTQIA+
- 91% Neurodivergent
- 27% Experience of Homelessness
- 91% Food Insecurity
- 51% Experience with DCF involvement
- 8% Experience of housing insecurity
- 87% Self-Identified Mental Health challenges
- 4% Refugees
- 11% Dropped out or unenrolled

- 53% Young adults: disabled
- 27% currently homelessness

“Being in FFC
decreases
depression and
suicidal thoughts”
-Highschool Senior

“FFC is important
because it
changes people”
- Highschool sophomore

“When I was homeless
without FFC I would
not have known
what to do” -
High School Junior



Outcomes:

Expand Engagement:

- Reach 75 youth/young adults/family members/year

Sustain High School Program:

- 2 days/week for high for at risk youth

Fund Young Adult Drop-In:

- 2 days/week serving homeless/disabled participants

Increase Equity Bridging

- 40 new connections to services/supports

Narcan Distribution

- To directly Impacted families



Real Life Outcomes:

**“FFC keeps you safe
in a mental health way.”**

- High school senior

**“I don’t want to go down the
road of doing
weed and coke again,
that’s why I come to FFC”**

- Young adult

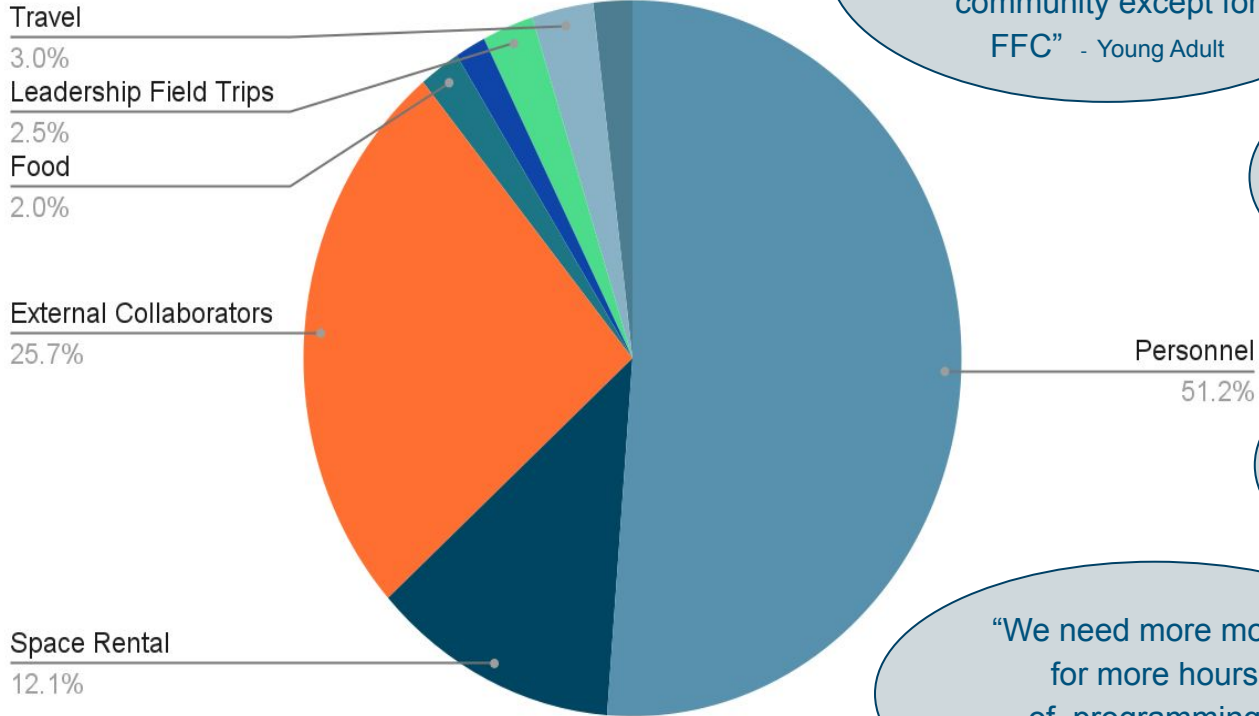
**“FFC is important
because it gives us
a sense of community
and builds connections”**

- Highschool sophomore

**“When I got out of
the hospital,
I came to FFC because
it is my safe place”**

- Young adult

Project Spending Breakdown



“We need this money because people are not helping us in the community except for FFC” - Young Adult

“If it wasn’t for gas cards I won’t be able to get to my Doctor’s appointment in Springfield” - Young Adult

“We want to be able to have more experiences and field trips” - Young Adult

“We need more money for more hours of programming!” - Highschool Senior

Questions



“If they have questions,
let me talk to them!
I’ll tell them why we need FFC!!!”

-Young adult



Sources

1. [Vermont Agency of Education:Annual Statistical Report Percent of Students Approved for Free and Reduced Price School Meals School Year 2023-2024](#)
2. [PL4 Disparity Impact Statement: Taking the Lead with a Shared Vision for Prevention: Sustainable, Scalable, Equitable.](#)
3. [Vermont Department of Health: Opioid Overdose Dashboard](#)
4. [Search Institute: Developmental Relationships](#)
5. [Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation](#)
6. ['Free play' for children, teens is vital to social development](#)
7. [Global Evidence for Peer Support: Humanizing Healthcare](#)
8. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma Informed Approach](#)
9. [Pillars of Friends for Change](#)