



Vermont Foodbank CEO Discusses the Need for Systems Change in Vermont and New Hampshire

Most Vermonters and New Hampshireites nurture a deep understanding of how our physical environment is interconnected and interdependent and understand how impacting one part of a natural system affects another. However, when it comes to our constructed social/political systems we struggle to understand the interconnections and interdependencies. Access to health care, food, housing and meaningful work are all essential to health and family stability, yet many of our neighbors can't fulfill those needs

on their own. Programs designed to help often separate these interdependent needs into "program" areas that lose the forest for the trees. We've designed systems that don't do what we really want them to do – help families achieve stability.

The systems need to change, but before that can happen we need to understand why the systems don't work. As the CEO of the Vermont Foodbank, a statewide organization with a mission to ensure that no one in Vermont goes hungry, I want us to be a catalyst for change. That's why I'm so excited about what ReThink Health: UCRV is doing and the work that is starting to happen elsewhere. For example, the Foodbank is part of a team in Vermont's Caledonia and southern Essex counties working to create the "Cal-Essex Accountable Health Community" using the same basic principles that underlie ReThink Health: UCRV. There are other efforts out there in different stages of germination and growth.

I want the Foodbank to support communities that are making the important connections to start changing systems. I want to hear what an organization like the VT Foodbank can bring to the table and how we can help communities reach their goals. I'll bring our resources, our learning and our concern for all of our neighbors – and leave my organizational ego at home. Let's discover how our social and political systems interconnect and create adaptive systems that understand those connections. The result will be neighbors who can build aspirations and see themselves as part of a prosperous future.