

Vermont Humanities Council Program Narrative, 2/9/2018

Mission Statement

The Vermont Humanities Council (VHC) has a new mission statement: “The Vermont Humanities Council seeks to engage all Vermonters in the world of ideas, foster a culture of thoughtfulness and inspire a lifelong love of reading and learning.” The previous mission statement read, “The Vermont Humanities Council strives to make Vermont a state in which every individual reads, participates in public affairs, and continues to learn throughout life.”

In a word, the Council is about **education**—lifelong learning for *all* Vermonters of *all* backgrounds and ages. The Council believes that engagement with the world of ideas, in interaction with others, contributes uniquely to richer lives, stronger communities, and a more humane society. In 2017 VHC sponsored 840 talks, book discussions, literacy programs, and other humanities events in 145 Vermont towns, including communities in every county, and partnered with 297 organizations.

Literacy Work

The Humanities Council promoted—and continues to promote—literacy for Vermonters of all ages in a variety of ways:

- In 2017 VHC served a total of 301 **adult literacy students** in two ways: first, through 48 reading and discussion events, 11 of which were held in correctional facilities in partnership with the Department of Corrections and the Community High School of Vermont. (122 adults participated in those correction programs.) Second, our professional development programs gave adult literacy educators and high school completion educators the skills to lead reading discussions as part of their classes. Participants included teachers at correctional facilities and teachers of pregnant and parenting teens at Parent Child Centers. The Council also provided 824 free books to 375 teachers and students. These programs make a dramatic impact on adult literacy students, and help professional development educators be more effective in their work.
- In 2017, VHC sponsored 19 **Never Too Early** projects for childcare providers, and 22 **Read with Me** projects for parents. 257 caregivers and 292 parents took part in these programs, helping an estimated 3,800 children in their care gain essential early language and literacy skills. Through these programs, VHC distributed 5,676 free books to families and professional child care providers. (Incarcerated parents’ books were mailed home to their children to help maintain parent-child relationships and encourage early literacy during incarceration.) In January 2018 VHC began piloting NTE literacy programs that have social and emotional learning as their theme. There is still work to be done, but early sessions have been very well received by attendees and are very much of interest to child care providers. One trainer posted word of such a two-session training on her list serve, and the training was filled to capacity (15 people) in two hours. A second two-session training was scheduled immediately at the same location, and it, too, was fully subscribed.
- In the summer of 2017, 218 at-risk **middle school students** took part in theme-based, week-long humanities day camps at 14 schools in nine counties. Camps improve students’ attitudes about reading and learning, and enhance crucial skills. Teachers, students, and parents report that these week-long programs cause many students to view themselves as more capable learners, and raise their academic, personal, and employment goals. The need for these camps is enormous.

The Vermont Community Foundation reports that Vermont ranks last in the nation for the percentage of low-income children who participate in academic and enrichment programs outside school time. Without out-of-school learning opportunities like Humanities Camps, at-risk children can fall further behind their better-resourced peers with each passing year.

- The Council distributed **8,286 free books** to children and adults through its literacy programs.

Community Programs for the General Public

The Vermont Humanities Council also provided hundreds of educational events that enriched the lives of tens of thousands of Vermonters. These events strengthened communities and supported key community organizations such as libraries, schools, and hospitals.

- In 2017 the Council facilitated **Veterans Book Groups** in four sites: Lakeside VA Clinic in Burlington (for women), The Veterans Place in Northfield, and two at the VA in White River Junction (one for women veterans, and one for combat veterans.) 54 different veterans took part in a total of 31 meetings. In January 2018 VHC started a *fifth* Veterans Book Group at Lyndon State College.
- 74 health care professionals at four hospitals took part in **Literature and Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care**. This national workplace reading and discussion program has been shown to improve patient care by helping health care professionals improve communication and interpersonal skills while increasing job satisfaction, cultural awareness, and empathy for patients.
- In 2017 **Vermont Reads**, the Humanities Council's statewide one-book community program, featured Jacqueline Woodson's beautiful childhood memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*. This story of a young person finding her voice is written in verse, and examines the strength of family bonds. Schools, libraries, and other community groups in an impressive 94 Vermont towns took part in *Brown Girl Dreaming* programs, the second-highest number of participating towns since the Vermont Reads program began 15 years ago. Adult literacy students at AEL centers and prisons also took part in Vermont Reads programs. VHC distributed 4,200 free copies of the book during the year. The 2018 Vermont Reads book is *Bread and Roses, Too*, by celebrated Vermont author Katherine Paterson. This novel about the 1912 mill strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts describes how 30 children of strikers were put on a train to Barre, Vermont, where they lived out of harm's way until the strike was over. The book tells the story several of those children.
- In 2017 the Humanities Council ran 99 **book discussions** in 22 towns, engaging 1,226 people and contributing to Vermont's creative economy and quality of life by promoting lifelong learning, reading, libraries, and community-building. VHC also hosted 209 **free public talks** in libraries, schools, museums, and other community centers in 86 different towns. These talks were attended by about 11,500 people, and thousands more watched on cable-access TV or online.
- In 2017 VHC gave 22 **grants** totaling \$40,000 to other Vermont nonprofit organizations.
- For the fourth year, full scholarships allowed Vermont school humanities educators to attend the Council's 2017 **annual fall conference**, "The Double-Edged Sword of Technology." More than 250 people attended this conference, which featured a variety of accomplished and engaging speakers exploring the ways that technology has shaped society. Twenty-eight educators attended on full scholarships, and 17 full or partial scholarships were awarded to members of the public, and for the first time to three librarians.

- For the fourth year, we helped 31 towns around Vermont hold participatory readings of Frederick Douglass’s 1852 Fourth of July address. A record 978 people of all ages participated in these readings in 2017.
- For the third year, VHC ran, in partnership with UVM’s Humanities Center, six free public programs that brought a scholar presenter to lead discussions in an informal setting with food and drinks available. Designed to engage people in their 20s and 30s—but including adults of all ages—*Ideas on Tap* is held at ArtsRiot in Burlington.
- VHC and the Vermont Principals’ Association co-sponsored the Vermont competition for the *Scripps National Spelling Bee* as they have annually since 2005. Before that, Vermont didn’t participate in the national competition.

In late January 2018, one Vermonter from Middlebury wrote VHC to say, “Whenever old out-of-state friends tease me about living in Vermont—‘Isn’t that the place that has more cows than people?’—I have a question in return. “Do you have any organization that comes even remotely close to doing what VHC does for Vermont?’ I didn’t think you did.”

Change of Leadership at VHC

After 16 years as executive director, Peter Gilbert informed the VHC board that he would like to retire this year. A search committee has been formed, and a national search will begin shortly with the thought that a new director might be hired or in place by this summer or fall.

State’s FY19 Budget

VHC understands that the state budget is under great pressures. But a modest increase in state funding would enable it to fund what it anticipates will be significantly increased demand for its new NTE literacy program that relates to social and emotional learning, and the new, fifth Veterans Book Group, at Lyndon State College, which is not funded. Moreover, VHC doesn’t know what the effect will be on fundraising of either the federal income tax changes or the departure of the executive director of 16 years. And so there is concern about meeting VHC’s private fundraising goals (\$325,000), particularly the unrestricted private fundraising goal (\$160,000), which may be ambitious, stretch goals even though they are the same as in 2017. An increase, perhaps one of 3-4%, would be very helpful indeed. Thank you.

Vermont Humanities Council Approved 2018 Budget

Our fiscal year is the calendar year, and so our 2018 budget relates to the State's 2019 budget.

	PROGRAM TOTALS	Approved 2018 Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
4010 - Contributions Unrestricted		165,000.00
4020 - Contribution Restricted		142,725.00
4220 - NEH Grant		699,860.00
4230- State Funds		217,959.00
4300 - Program Svc Fees & Book Sales		81,505.00
4700 - Temporarily Restricted		17,275.00
4900 - Miscellaneous Operating Income		2,000.00
4901- Interest Income		44,040.00
Total Income		<u>1,370,364.00</u>
Expense		
5000-Salaries		571,001.00
5100-Benefits		175,000.00
6000-Professional Fees		85,924.00
6050-Honoraria		138,125.00
6100 - Supplies		11,950.00
6200-Telephone		7,000.00
6300 - Postage and Shipping		29,750.00
6400-Occupancy		23,000.00
6500-Equip Maint & Rental		16,600.00
6650 - Books		71,389.00
6660- Capitol Improvements		5,000.00
6700 - Travel		40,852.00
6800 - Conferences, Conventions, Mtgs		48,592.00
6900-Membership Dues		12,606.00
7000 - Awards		78,050.00
7300 - Miscellaneous		6,750.00
8000 - Printing & Publications		48,775.00
Total Expense		<u>1,370,364.00</u>
Net Ordinary Income		<u>0.00</u>

How much did we do?

LITERACY PROGRAMS

Our literacy programs include Never Too Early, Connections, Humanities Camps, and Voices.

The programs serve low-income parents, childcare providers, at-risk middle school students, teen parents, adult basic education students, and men and women in Correctional Facilities.

134 events (including 19 in correctional facilities)

900 individuals took part in these events.

We distributed **8,286 free books** through these programs.

BROADCAST OUTREACH

VPR commentaries by Executive Director Peter Gilbert reach **10,000 to 14,000 listeners** nearly every month.

Many of our **72 First Wednesdays talks** are broadcast by public access television channels across Vermont.

A Vermonter from Middlebury wrote to the Council: "Whenever old out-of-state friends tease me about living in Vermont—'Isn't that the place that has more cows than people?'—I have a question in return. 'Do you have any organization that comes even remotely close to doing what the Vermont Humanities Council does for Vermont?'"

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

A total of seven kinds of programs, including Vermont Reads, First Wednesdays, and Speakers Bureau.

553 events in **135 different towns** across Vermont

22,896 Vermonters from a wide range of ages and backgrounds took part in these events.

We distributed **4,200 free books** through these programs.

OTHER PROGRAMS FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

Veterans Book Groups:

54 veterans in four book groups attended **31 events**.

Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care: **52 care providers** attended **21 events** at 4 hospitals.

GRANTS

We gave **\$40,000 in grants to 20 Vermont nonprofits**.

How well did we do it?

In August 2015, the Vermont Humanities Council received the report of a three-person National Endowment for the Humanities team that had examined us and our work earlier in the year. Such reviews are conducted every five years. The report concluded:

"Whether one looks at public appeal, the fulfilling of community needs, imaginative leadership, organizational effectiveness, or collaboration with other forces for humanity, the Vermont Humanities Council ranks among the best organizations in the nation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities can proudly point to it as exemplary of its national mission."

Is anyone better off because of our work?

From a participant in our **Humanities Camps** (week-long summer day camps for at-risk middle school students):

"Humanities Camp helped me see myself differently as a learner. I used to think a lot of learning was boring, but this camp showed me learning can be fun and interesting."

From a participant in our **Read With Me** literacy program:

"I learned that it is so important to read to my daughter. It is the best gift that I can give to her."

From a female participant in one of our **Veterans Book Groups**:

"This group was fundamental to giving me a smoother transition into the civilian world."



Program Participants 2017

Participants	2017 Totals	Humanities-Based Literacy Programs
Adult education and other educators	11	Voices Training in how to facilitate book discussions
At-risk middle school students	218	Humanities Camps Week-long summer day camps
Childcare providers and low-income parents	549	Never Too Early Family literacy training
Corrections inmates and probationers, adult and teen literacy students, and social service organization clients	122	Connections Reading and discussion sessions
	900	
Participants	2017 Totals	Public Programs
Adults	1,226	Reading and Discussion 99 book discussions in 22 towns
Adults	4,421	Speakers Bureau 133 public lectures hosted by local non-profits in 83 towns
Adults and students	6,389	First Wednesdays 71 talks at nine regional centers around Vermont
Adults and students	186	Ideas on Tap Six events at ArtsRiot in Burlington
Adults and students	978	Reading Frederick Douglass 31 participatory readings around Vermont
Adults, students, Department of Corrections inmates and probationers, adult and teen literacy students	9,348	Vermont Reads Community activities related to one book
Adults, teachers, and some students	242	Fall Conference 1½ day conference at UVM's Davis Center
Veterans	54	Veterans Book Groups 31 sessions in four different book groups
Hospital staff	52	Humanities at the Heart of Health Care Reading and discussion groups in four hospitals
	22,896	
Contacts with public via media	125,000	Vermont Public Radio Commentaries 10 commentaries by Peter Gilbert

Programs at a Glance

Program	Audience	Number Served in 2017	Locations
Community Programs			
VERMONT READS			
Brings Vermonters together for activities related to one book. (2017: <i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> , by Jacqueline Woodson.)	General public and students, as well as audiences at correctional facilities, literacy centers, and Humanities Camps	An estimated 9,348 people in 94 towns participated. VHC distributed more than 4,200 free books.	Schools, libraries, community centers, and other nonprofits statewide; author visits to schools and communities
ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE			
A 1½ day conference that explores a topic in depth. (2017: <i>The Double-Edged Sword of Technology</i>)	General public and teachers	242 attendees, including 28 educators attending on full scholarships	Held at University of Vermont's Dudley Davis Center
READING AND DISCUSSION			
Discussions led by a VHC-trained scholar help make connections between people, books, and ideas	General public and intergenerational audiences	1,226 Vermonters took part in 99 discussions in 22 Vermont towns	Statewide, hosted by libraries or other nonprofits
VETERANS BOOK GROUPS			
Reading and discussion programs for veterans	Former service members, including one group of female veterans	54 veterans participated in four book groups that met for a total of 31 sessions	White River Junction VA Medical Center (two groups), Burlington Lakeside Veterans Clinic, and the Veterans' Place in Northfield
READING FREDERICK DOUGLASS			
Annual community participatory readings of Frederick Douglass's 1852 Fourth of July address.	General public	31 events involved 978 participants of all ages	30 towns around Vermont
LITERATURE AND MEDICINE: HUMANITIES AT THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE			
A hospital-based reading and discussion program open to all hospital and affiliated staff	Hospitals/health care staff	52 people at four hospitals	Copley Hospital, NEVT Regional Hospital, Rutland Regional Medical Center, White River Junction Veterans Affairs Medical Center
BEFORE YOUR TIME PODCAST SERIES			
Monthly podcast episodes that explore Vermont's history	General public	Two pilot episodes were downloaded over 1400 times	On beforeyourtime.org . VTDigger helped produce and promote.
VERMONT PUBLIC RADIO COMMENTARIES			
Humanities-related commentaries by Peter Gilbert	General public	10,000–14,000 listeners/episode (10 in 2017 ≈ 125,000 listeners)	On VPR, at vpr.net , and at vermonthumanities.org

Program	Audience	Number Served in 2017	Locations
Talks and Living History			
FIRST WEDNESDAYS			
Free public lectures featuring nationally renowned speakers in nine communities each month, October through May	General public within reach of nine regional hub communities	6,389 people attended 71 talks at nine locations	Brattleboro, Essex Junction, Manchester, Middlebury, Montpelier, Newport, Norwich, Rutland, and St. Johnsbury
SPEAKERS BUREAU			
Presenters made available to nonprofit organizations for public lectures	General public	4,421 attendees at 133 programs in 83 towns	Hosted at libraries and other community centers statewide
IDEAS ON TAP			
A series exploring engaging topics in a casual setting	General public, including younger adult audiences	186 people attended six events	ArtsRiot, a Burlington restaurant/bar and performance space
Grants			
GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES			
Grants to nonprofits for humanities programming	General public	20 grants totaling \$40,000 and serving tens of thousands of Vermonters	Museums, libraries, and performing and community venues statewide
Humanities-Based Literacy			
NEVER TOO EARLY			
Early literacy professional development for childcare providers, and family literacy training for parents	Childcare providers and parents, especially low-income households and teen parents	257 different providers and 292 different parents at 97 events, 19 of which were at correctional facilities. 5,676 free books distributed.	Childcare centers and home care settings, parent-child centers, Head Start, correctional facilities, and low-income family programs statewide
CONNECTIONS			
A reading and discussion program, with the Community High School of VT, the VT Dept. of Corrections, and community organizations	Corrections inmates and probationers, teen and adult literacy students, social service organization clients	122 individuals served, and 23 group events held, including 11 in correctional facilities. 768 free books distributed.	Correctional facilities and probation and parole sites, social service organizations, and adult education centers statewide
HUMANITIES CAMPS			
Week-long summer day camps for at-risk middle-school students. The camps strengthen literacy skills and build positive peer groups.	At-risk middle-schoolers, ages 11 to 14	218 students in camps at 14 Vermont public schools. 1,018 free books distributed.	14 schools statewide*
VOICES			
Professional development program for Adult Education and Literacy and other educators to facilitate book discussions; gift books for their students	Adult educators and students, including refugees and immigrants	11 adult educators received training. 375 teachers and students (91 of whom were in correctional facilities) received 824 free books.	18 adult education centers and prison/probation sites statewide

* Brattleboro Area Middle School, Camels Hump Middle School (Richmond), Canaan Schools, Castleton Village School, Grand Isle School, Irasburg Village School, North Country Union Junior High School (Derby), Northfield Middle/High School, Richford Junior-Senior High School, St. Albans City School, St. Johnsbury School, Stowe Middle School, Waits River Valley School, Windsor Schools