

VT House and Senate Appropriations Committee Testimony, 2/25/19 - Morrisville

My name is Julia Scheier. I live in downtown Morrisville. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you not only as a taxpayer but also as a representative of **Salvation Farms**, a Morrisville-based non-profit with regional and national impact.

You may be familiar with our work GLEANING -- going to farms with surplus produce and moving that food to Vermonters who need it.

What you may not be as familiar with -- is Salvation Farms' workforce development training program in Chittenden County -- at a food hub in Winooski - where we make second chances available to some of our most vulnerable neighbors. While processing Vermont's surplus crops for the food insecure, we're simultaneously running a 16-week job training program for those with serious hurdles to employment -- women and men with histories of homelessness, incarceration, addiction and disabilities; some face several of these obstacles all at once.

Our program offers a hand up -- and we currently have a 90% hiring rate. And, since 2012, this program has distributed more than 1.8 million servings of local produce to those in need. -- All made possible through philanthropic funding.

I'm here to urge you to support this important work -- H.328 & H.371

Salvation Farms is getting individuals *off* public assistance and *into* the workforce -- so they can support their families and pay their taxes. It's a boost to the economy on multiple levels. And with the food these folks are helping to process, Salvation Farms is feeding Vermont's food insecure. Please consider supporting Salvation Farms in your budgeting work this year.

In conclusion, I would love to share with you some reflections from a 2018 trainee, Mandy:

*I felt good about what I was doing. I learned to work as a team. I learned to run machines. We were taught manufacturing skills, as well as shipping, receiving, and inventory. I learned a lot from Salvation Farms. We all received CPR and First Aid, ServSafe, and OSHA-10. The resume help I received was a huge help. At the end of the program I felt confident in my ability to apply for jobs and be taken as a serious applicant. Right after completing the program I interviewed and was hired at King Street Center as their chef. I am still employed there eight months later. I'm very lucky. It's a wonderful place to work. **I no longer receive public assistance. I work full time and am able to provide for my family.** Salvation Farms is amazing. I know the program has changed people's lives for the better. It would be wonderful if they could be funded to find a permanent home. The work they are doing is so important for the environment, the people, and the world. Thank you for your time.*

Signed,

Julia Scheier, Morrisville
Salvation Farms
802-888-4360

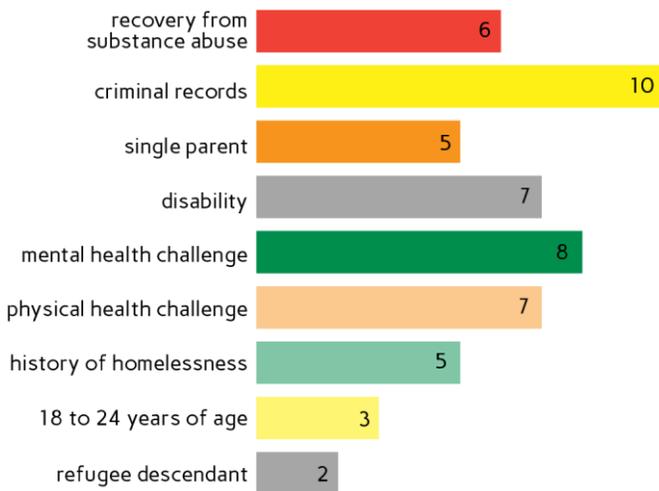
Workforce Development at Salvation Farms' Vermont Commodity Program



Twenty-one (21) individuals have completed a 16-week job readiness training in food handling and light manufacturing at Salvation Farms' food hub in Winooski. Eighteen (18) individuals secured full- or part-time employment post training, a rate of 86%. In the **last year**, Salvation Farms' workforce development trainee rate of employment increased to **91%**, 10 out of 11.



The individuals who completed Salvation Farms' job readiness program confronted diverse barriers to employment.



87% of trainees report changes in food system knowledge and food choices.



73% report an increase in self-esteem and confidence.

Cost savings to Vermont when someone remains out of jail is roughly \$70,000 per year.

Salvation Farms seeks a one-time appropriation for planning and buildout of infrastructure needed to move the job-training program and food hub into a new and permanent location.

Additionally, Salvation Farms seeks an annual appropriation to support the job-training components of the food hub's operation. Salvation Farms will report annually the program's impact to the Legislature; how many individuals receive training, move into employment, and report changes in their self-esteem and diet-related behaviors.

Salvation Farms' workforce development efforts are **in partnership with** the VT Department of Labor, Community Action, VocRehab, Creative Workforce Solutions, Probation & Parole, Community Justice, Pathways VT, among others.

Salvation Farms' Vermont Commodity Program has distributed more than 1,845,330 servings of local food to Vermont's food insecure since 2012. Through distributing wholesome food and providing job training in its food hub, Salvation Farms serves an individual's whole person. This fosters self-worth and affects physical and mental health. Salvation Farms prepares people for employment, helping them support themselves and contribute to the local economy. **A win-win-win.**

Watch this brief video to learn more: <https://youtu.be/bC7QvE1fw7w>

Salvation Farms is a federally recognized, 501c3 non-profit with more than fifteen years of experience providing experiential education opportunities to Vermont communities. Salvation Farms' founder serves as its Executive Director.