

3SquaresVT Awareness Day  
February 5, 2026

Hello, my name is Cynthia Hughes. I live in Westminster.

I'm here today to talk about 3SquaresVT and to ask you to:

- Support NOFA-VT's request for \$500,000 in ongoing funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining proven programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share, and
- Support Vermont Foodbank's request for a \$5 million total appropriation in FY27, including \$2 million to support their network of partners, \$2 million for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters local food purchasing program, and \$1 million for Ready Response to ensure food access in disasters and emergencies.

For the past couple of years I have visited our local food pantry to help support a single parent household within my larger family, a father with 5 children. This family is also supported by the 3Squares program in Vermont, receiving a monthly allowance for groceries. The combined programs have kept this working family afloat. But we are most fortunate in Vermont to have local food pantries that in addition to offering packaged groceries – dairy, grains, canned goods – provide access for families to fresh locally grown produce that many places in our country do not have access to on a weekly basis - vegetables like root crops, tomatoes, fresh greens, and in the spring seedlings that allowed me to provide my family with homegrown kale, chard, tomatoes, basil and beans.

Last year we also participated in NOFA's Farmshare program. This was a huge blessing and provided inspiration for more home cooked nutritional meals – this dad loves to cook when he can and has taught his older children the art of making a decent meal from what's in the cupboard and fridge. I also joined in the fun making batches of pesto for their freezer. The Farmshare program, to me, brings a level of humanity and dignity to the weekly shopping trip – the joy of picking out delicious greens or a batch of just-picked green beans or fresh berries. These weekly trips inspire meals that perhaps wouldn't happen without fresh ingredients to try. Berries, a treat largely unaffordable for bigger families, are loaded with nutrients for growing kids. The food pantry and the farmstand also gave away pumpkins to kids for Halloween, something that has become quite expensive in recent years. I can't speak highly enough of these programs and I feel so fortunate to live in Vermont, a state that time and again has shown its heart.

Once, again, I am asking you to:

- Support NOFA-VT's request for \$500,000 in ongoing funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining proven programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share, and
- Support Vermont Foodbank's request for a \$5 million total appropriation in FY27, including \$2 million to support their network of partners, \$2 million for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters local food purchasing program, and \$1 million for Ready Response to ensure food access in disasters and emergencies.

Thank you for supporting 3SquaresVT, Vermont Foodbank and NOFA.