

UCS News Release

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\$5K Grant Awarded to UCS Program for Youth in Transition

Bennington and Manchester, Vt. — Young adults in the United Counseling Service (UCS) Transitional Living Program will be switching from spaghetti and snack bars to nutritionally balanced, healthy meals as a result of new classes in cooking and life skills.

“Youth in this program typically rely on processed foods that are expensive and have poor nutritional value,” said Lorna Mattern, who directs the Specialized Children’s Services at UCS. “It’s no surprise that they are eager to learn a better way.”

Transitional Living Program Coordinator Debby Stanlewicz applied to the Vermont Caring Foundation, an affiliate of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont, for the five thousand dollar grant and was awarded full funding.

“I saw the need to help teens get to know the kitchen environment and applied for the grant,” Stanlewicz said. “It supports two six-week cooking classes and the cost of new materials for life skills classes.”

“The Vermont Caring Foundation provided funding in part because additional community support was already there,” Stanlewicz said.

Chefs from Kevin’s Place in North Bennington and T.J. Carmody’s restaurant in Bennington are volunteering their time and experience to the program, which will also benefit from collaboration with the [Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and](#) the University of Vermont’s [extension nutritionist Stacie Staab](#).

The Cooking for Life classes are tailored for young adults, ages 16 to 21, who have moved away from home and need to learn the skills necessary for establishing an independent life, including employment, safety, nutrition, shopping, budgeting, and health.

United Counseling Service is Bennington County’s provider of counseling, substance abuse treatment, community mental health care, and services for people with developmental disabilities. UCS offers care at outpatient centers in Bennington and Manchester, and 13 other facilities. UCS promotes healthy lifestyles, serves thousands of people every year, and employs more than 300 staff.

The Vermont Caring Foundation was formed in 2005 as a charitable affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont. It was created to raise and distribute funds to community-based programs that promote health education, prevention, and improvement, with a particular focus on Vermont children and teenagers.

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont is the state's oldest and largest private health insurer, providing coverage for about 180,000 Vermonters. It employs over 350 Vermonters at its headquarters in Berlin and branch offices in Williston, and offers group and individual health plans to Vermonters. More information about Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont is available on the Internet at www.bcbsvt.com. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont is an independent corporation operating under a license with Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans.

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