

NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

MEETING Notes

November 13th, 2025

10:00 – 11:30am

Meeting Goal

Providing an opportunity for people and organizations across Northwest and Central Vermont to come together to share information, make connections, and explore opportunities related to prevention of substance misuse and promoting wellbeing in our communities.

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Agenda:

Prevention Partner Updates

Backbone Updates

Partner Highlight: Sultana Khan from the YWCA

Partner Highlight: Christine Hughes from the Richard Kemp Center

Prevention Partner Updates

Hilary Denton (Prevention Consultant, Barre Health District): Better Life Partners is closing its doors, communities may be impacted by that. Counseling services end at the end of the year, prescriptions will end February 1st. The state is working with them to help all their patients get risk assessments or get into other programs

Nick Tatakis (Prevention Consultant, Burlington Health District): Recently published data briefs around cannabis use from VDH: [Cannabis regulatory landscape](#), [Cannabis Youth Health Concerns](#), and [Cannabis Adult Health Concerns](#).

Emma (Outright VT): They have officially launched the dates for Camp Outright (a residential summer camp for queer teens). There will be two different sessions: July 3rd to 9th, 11th through 17th. Outright offers full and partial scholarships and can also help with transportation costs. Past summer was amazing, with lots of queer joy, hope, and community building!!

Ali Dieng (Building Bright Futures): Building Bright Futures had their 6th annual regional summit around addressing the adverse effects of substance misuse on children and families while planting seeds of hope for a healthier community. Jessica Lahey was the keynote speaker in the morning, and there was a panel discussion in the afternoon with speakers from VDH, Moms in Recovery at DHMC, and Turning Point Center of Chittenden County, moderated by Kerri Douquette-Hoffman. They are still waiting for the recording of the event. Thank you to everyone who came!



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

Adrienne (United Way of Northwest VT): Common Good VT hosted their summit last week for the second year in a row. The event was mostly in person, with a hybrid option for some sessions. Thank you to those who came and all of the partners who led sessions and had tables!

Beth (Prevention Works! VT):

Vermont Community Leadership Network (VCLN) Workshop Series:

Uncertain Times Office Hours: Learning from Practitioners

Nonprofits and Community Groups are seeking ways to come together, to collaborate, and to share services as we face uncertainty. Join Vermont nonprofit practitioners already collaborating and sharing services for a one-hour office hour. Come with questions, challenges you are facing, requests for tools and templates. Each office hour will have a specific focus, from how to share benefits, partner on operations and services, and collaborate on programs. (Co-sponsors: Common Good Vermont, Vermont Council on Rural Development, and Leaves of Change VT)

1) Shared Services: Operational Back Office

December 5 | 12-1 PM | Virtual

Want to know how current nonprofits started sharing services? Want to know what should be included in agreements to share services? Ask questions of the nonprofit practitioners who manage shared services and meet other nonprofits interested in sharing services. [Register here.](#)

2) Collaborating and Partnering

January 12 | 12-1 PM | Virtual

Beyond sharing services, nonprofits can partner to deepen impacts, ensuring clients receive the support and services they rely on. In this time of reduction, how can partnerships help ensure programming doesn't come to a stop? Come with questions for practitioners who have worked in, formed, and managed collaboratives. [Register here.](#)

Backbone Updates

Brion Houston is here from the VTNG Counterdrug program! He will be joining NVRH in Region 3 in the next few weeks.

We had our summit on October 8th, thank you to those who came! 50 partners showed up to discuss the regional priorities around alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis for the next 18 months. There were 6 breakout groups built around the CADCA 7 Strategies, and from this, we have two projects that have a lot of momentum behind them. Winooski Partnership for Prevention has done a lot of work and research around the new alcohol policy bill. There will be a press conference soon, more details will be announced at a later date. The other project is advancing FHK campaign and working to decouple the alcohol and tobacco license. Both projects are awaiting approval from the Region 1 Funding Committee to allocate funds to support them.



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

Massive thank you to the Prevention Consultants (Hilary, Nick, Mary), Eva Zaret from CVPC, Marcus Aloisi from FHK, Kate Nugent from WPP, and Amy Brewer from the Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Coalition.

There will be a recap from the summit in a special newsletter coming soon!

Partner Highlight: Sultana Khan, Executive Director at the YWCA

This was a discussion on the future of nonprofits in terms of funding, mutual aid, collaboration, and infrastructure. The main outcome of the discussion was an emphasis on working together to keep work happening around the state. There will be a group facilitated by Olivia Harris and Sultana called "Imagine if..." to think of new and innovative ideas for the nonprofit world (participation form: [Imagine If...](#)). A paraphrased transcript of the entire discussion can be found below.

Background:

Sultana started at the YWCA in June. The YWCA received no federal funding and explicitly never went after federal funding. Due to the lapses in federal funding and the cancellation of grants, there is a loss of essential services that nonprofits have been providing. The system must be able to adapt to continue providing the essential services that the community needs. How can we meet some of those needs if they're not in the wheelhouse of an organization? As an example: the PRIDE Center provided essential services to the LGBTQIA+ community. With the loss of this organization, what support and skills will be lost? What can we as a community do to build skills? What does it look like for us to come together and do this?

Resource that is shaping her thinking:

[Abundance](#) by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson

This book about how progressive policies can create stagnant opportunities for the United States. VT is in the middle of a housing crisis, in part due to Act 250. In service of protecting the environment and not developing in the ways that other states are around us, we have created a housing crisis for ourselves. The book also talks about how grants are funded (NIH) and distributed. The average age of people who receive grants from the NIH goes up every year. The NIH is only providing funding for things that will have a guaranteed outcome based on past evidence-based strategies that worked at the time. This is leading to a gap in innovation and new discoveries. For example, the mRNA vaccine research never got funded by NIH. It only came to be because the private sector funded it when the public sector would not. There is a hesitation to take risks at state and federal level because of the fear of the funding not producing anything. This happens with foundations as well, but they are more likely to fund "risky" things than the



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

state or federal government. While evidence-based programming has its place, it cannot meet the needs of the time we find ourselves in.

Summit discussion:

The group Sultana was in was talking about cannabis policy (evidence-based strategies), how we bring public knowledge about that the laws are, and increase public understanding of policies and policy work. We currently only have one legislator that works in prevention (Kate Nugent). There was a suggestion to use some of the LPO money to provide prevention professionals with training to run a campaign in order to run for office or educate legislators. People who do not have any knowledge or experience in the prevention sector should not be making decisions on how prevention will be led in the state.

Open discussion on things you are reading or listening to that help you think about the way that nonprofits work that may be keeping us from doing good work? What helps you think a little differently?

Mariah (BPHC): Many nonprofits in Burlington are closing (Ex. CHL, Sara Holbrook Community Center), but we likely won't see the impact for a few years. I had an epiphany during a meeting about unhoused folks and syringes. I was expecting the same as city council meetings where it's mostly talk around the subject, but instead, everyone was like "here's what I'm doing, I want to volunteer, I'm showing up, what else can I do?" Many of these people are in volunteer groups as well. That piece as well as the lack of funding/resources, how do we build the skills of the community to be the response to the current times, and better support some things that are not funded where people are just coming together (ex. coming together to make masks during COVID). How can we better use/support this work?

Beth (PW!VT): we need to share and collaborate differently (United Way/Common Good are doing a good job of this). I see need for a shift where we need to be more generalists so that we can pivot and cross train (substance misuse and mental health as an example). An organization can pivot to fit the needs of the community. However, this can be hard because people work somewhere because they're passionate about their mission.

Stefani (Project All Together Now): love your thoughts, Sultana! These are all great questions. How do you create cross sector collaboration? This problem is staring us in the face right now, but it's not new. Nonprofits have been taught to compete for limited funding, and there needs to be a shift here. This has become more of a crisis of how we work together with the funding disappearing. We can generalize a bit more like Beth said, organizations can be mission driven and specialized, but we're passionate about helping humankind. So maybe the explicit mission doesn't matter as much. I'm not super in touch with the local community, but VT used to be the model of collaboration and innovation, and we've lost some of that shimmer.



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

Megan (UWNWVT): I just wanted to add onto what Beth mentioned about shared resources. UWNWVT and Common Good have been diving into that in the last year, with subsectors getting together and having impact with shared resources (hub). Area Agencies on Aging have created their own nonprofit network and now share resources in all sorts of different ways (saving over \$100,000 within months). Nonprofits do have to be run like a business; we can't rely on grants and philanthropy. The Prevention Network could have people come and share how they've been doing this.

Sultana: I went to an Uncertain Times meeting last week. Recovery folks have been creating a membership driven model for their members to receive discounted insurance premiums. The larger group of people seeking benefits through membership allows for that cheaper premium.

Adrienne (UWNWVT): it feels like we're talking about two different things: mutual aid and then also using existing infrastructure and making it more efficient. There's talk of a shared hub for legal support for VT nonprofits (VT Bar Foundation). Everything is happening so fast and part of the Common Good role is to keep everyone up to date. Common Good hosts round tables for their members. They had one about nonprofit mergers because sometimes that's what success looks like. (Megan asked about recordings from these).

Specific examples of how this thinking is shifting and how the YWCA is pivoting in response to the current climate:

She's thinking about this from a whole system thinking: how nonprofits are changing and driving change. She wants nonprofits to be in charge of what makes us different. There are many pathways to that (mutual aid, existing infrastructure). For example: YWCA is part of a much larger national organization. The national leadership was talking about what they were going to do about the language surrounding their mission in the current political climate. Some people say they cannot afford to be brazen about the mission because they don't want to become targets, especially in more rural communities. Others support the brazen message and want to stand up for themselves. All approaches can be used if they have the same vision.

YWCA maintains a 100+ years old girls summer camp. This has changed to be a girls+ summer camp to include nonbinary and trans people. They are focused on ensuring staff are representative of the population they serve. Lots of people are unhappy, but the YWCA has broadened to serve a larger community. This summer camp is very impacted by climate change; in past years, the summer camp has been rustic (no electricity or phones), but they had to pivot this summer because it was so warm. They must test the lake every week to check on the cyanobacteria. Can they use the camp as a way to teach about climate change and action, a space where young people can learn about this (good example of being general)? This still aligns



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

with the mission of the YWCA because it's supportive of women and girls, who are most impacted by climate change.

They are building a capital campaign to make the camp more energy efficient by moving to run the camp entirely with solar power. Because the camp is only open for 4 months, the rest of the energy is not going to be used during the other 8 months. They will be donating 50% of their solar power to town of South Hero. They recognize that they're part of a broader community, and this is also a big incentive for donors. The YWCA is aiming to raise 2.5 million dollars, 10% of which will be donated to climate related projects in the community that support low-income residents of Grand Isle. It could be used to update heating systems, build solar panels, whatever helps the climate and residents.

Update from Sultana and Olivia Harris

"We're starting a new series of virtual hangs that we're calling *Imagine If...* and we'd love to have you join us. Let's spend our time together thinking about the opportunity in front of us: the chance to build an impactful, abundant, values-driven non-profit sector. We want these conversations to be loosely facilitated with only two intentions: 1) to share resources that are shaping how we're thinking about what to build next 2) to build hope for the future of our sector. These will not be spaces where professionalism outweighs authenticity or fear drives our conversation. They will not be conversations where we police each other or where we say, "Well, that could never happen, because..."

We want to name our big dreams and speak them out loud. We want to get excited about what could be.

If you're interested in participating, fill out the form below. More to come soon."

Form: [Imagine If...](#)

List of resources that is shaping Sultana's thinking:

Abundance by Ezra Klein/Derek Thompson

The Vermont Futures Project (Kevin Chu is amazing!)

The Vermont Prosperity Project (I've now heard Amanda Janoo speak multiple times and am always uplifted by her work)

What's Possible: Investing Now for Prosperous Sustainable Neighborhoods from the Federal Reserve Bank of NY

The Well-being of Future Generations Act of 2015 from Wales



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

Partner Highlight: Christine Hughes, Director at the Richard Kemp Center

General History

The Richard Kemp Center is a Cultural Empowerment Center in Burlington's Old North End, formed to be a local response to the harmful impact of systemic racism. Systemic racism involves both the deep structures and the surface structures of racial oppression (source: *Racist America* by Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey). Christine Hughes has a background in human services, serving people with barriers to employment including youth, people with a history of incarceration, mental health, disabilities, racial justice, community organizing

2019 and 2020: Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (VTRA) launched a Wellness Working Group. They met regularly and produced recommendations, spoke into racial justice legislation and had significant impact on things like credentialing for mental health providers. This led to the idea that they needed a physical place to get together. VTRA does a lot of statewide policy work, Richard Kemp Center is more of a local organization that in some ways is involved in response to impact of systemic racism that produced disparate outcomes.

The Richard Kemp Center is named after Christine's father: a well-known local justice advocate who lived his life on purpose. Causes he was passionate about included affordable housing (Involved with VT Housing Alliance), advocacy & support for community members returning from VT prisons, and voter registration. He also wanted to decriminalize the use of cannabis.

Events/Programs:

Youth Movie Night 2nd and 4th Friday of every month. They try to show movies that have a theme so they can have a discussion afterwards. Lots of kids that show up are regulars from the neighborhood. They are currently having a lot of fun with *Inside Out* and *Inside Out 2*, giving them an opportunity to talk about mental health. There is also a little library that has some banned books so the kids can read them

Monthly community dinner 2nd Saturday: usually 25-30 people that show up to have a meal and hang out. People who are new to the area will come so that they can meet people

Math through Art Mural: done by students at Eagle Bay Academy (formerly Horizons School), which is an alternative school. They're trying to figure out more ways to make the center useful for the students. Symbols that they've adopted (come from west Africa and are adopted in the work they do) are found in the mural, which is based on the work of black mathematicians. Have another mural that was just completed made by Juniper Arts Creative and funded by VT arts council, lots of meaning in that



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

4th Annual Block Party (back to school): they shut the street down for the day. Some of the activities there included a bouncy castle, mini golf, and face painting. Community paint day as part of the block party. People were making art that ended up in the mural

Growing Homes: This is a program that aims to help black and brown people gain access to land/home ownership (racism baked into act 250). Partnered with Champlain housing trust and HUD. Helping people with financial wellness as well. Preparing to do a relaunch, there's a lot to do with this where they need a half-time dedicated staff person

Annual trip to NMAAHC in DC: Sankofa is a symbol they've adopted that means learning from history. Annual trip in April through fundraising efforts took 26 people to DC. Last year was the 3rd year they did that. Last year they were a little nervous about going with everything going on. People in red hats were there, not sure if they could do it again, normally during spring break

Fundraiser at first Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington: plug for private donors during MLK day. They are looking forward to doing that sort of fundraising again.

Wellness Day with Ferene Paris: done it for a couple years in a row. Free lunch program partnered with the schools to provide that. Only a half day program (12-4:30/5). It's still relatively new, program has been small but hoping to grow that.

R.I.C.H.: race, identity, culture, history, identified a need to help youth navigate growing up in a very white environment. They started working with the VT adoption consortium with children in mixed race environments but have expanded since then. Sessions are virtual monthly. They have hopes and plans to expand that to do things in person.

Wellness table: Wellness is... asking kids what wellness is to them. They also have some free giveaways to get a handle on what people do to maintain wellness based on what people are taking (ex. Sports, reading, listening to music, yoga, bike riding, road trips, affirmations, prayer)

Center is available to rent for organizations and private events (ex. Grad parties, celebrations of life, weddings, etc.). Center is alive and well, a little nervous about funding but have a lot of faith in the people in the community. They are actively thinking of innovative ways to sustain the center and serve the community

Email with questions: Christine@richardkempcenter.org Thank you to our sponsors!!

Looking Ahead

Our next meeting is December 11th! Also, be on the lookout for a newsletter on upcoming projects and notes from the Summit.



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

