

RIVERFLOW

FALL NEWSLETTER 2024



Dear Extended Community of Riverflow, Friends and Supporters,

It is with an overflowing heart that I sit down to write this letter on behalf of all of us working together to bring the Riverflow Community into reality. Elizabeth Campbell, a founding parent, with focused tenacity and driven by a sense of urgency for more housing options to be created in the state of Vermont, founded the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) three years ago. Her heart was filled with the longing for her son, Jesse, to have a place he could call home, in which he could be deeply known and appreciated. This led to Act 186, a grant from the state of Vermont that encouraged the Riverflow team to take the leap; a kick-start for our small team to get planning and dream up a community! Our founding team was made up of Elizabeth Campbell, Jim and Amy Caffry, and myself. Through late night conversations, visioning and hoping, and motivated by love, Riverflow, an inclusive community, started to come into being. We all knew well the need for more long-term living options in Vermont that would be structured to welcome people of all abilities and, specifically, welcome individuals with more significant needs. Not far into the beginning stages, Riverflow's founding team was joined by Kathy and Mike Langen, who had been on their own journey, desperately searching for somewhere their son, Charlie, could pursue his adult life.



Just over a year ago, we received the thrilling news that we had been awarded the Act 186 planning grant from the state. We started searching for properties, thinking that it would take a long time to find the right spot. But the stars aligned, and through a magical story of serendipity and a lot of courage, we found 57 Cedar Lane. We did some serious research on other properties, but our hearts kept bringing us back to Monkton and the winding gravel lane leading to a sprawling one-story house with eight bedrooms, berry bushes, and perennial gardens. Though the home and property had been sleeping under years of abandonment, it was a treasure of a place, with secret gardens overgrown with weeds; anyone and everyone who visited could feel the warmth hidden below the neglect.

We purchased the property and have been deep in the process of home design, program development, and forming the on-the-ground team. The Board came together early in 2024, with several additional members joining who brought a wealth and breadth of knowledge and expertise to the rapidly progressing project. River Parker, a social worker, came on board as a force, carrying the project management of the house construction and helping with policy development. Frank Cioffi came on as Board President and Miranda Dils as a Board Member to help with strategic planning and the overall growth of the organization. Seneca Gonzalez and William Lescene agreed to move from New York to join our team as the lead householders for our first community home.

We are deeply grateful to Building Energy, Patenaude Electric, and the many other crews for working tirelessly to bring this house out of dilapidation and into its beautiful, full potential. Generosity has come towards us from so many different directions. We are indebted to the Camphill Foundation for its critical role as a pass-through non-profit, receiving our donations. Each of you who has already given financially or come to work on the volunteer days has made the magic happen!

Every day counts as we work towards opening on October 7, 2024. We are still dreaming of a greenhouse, a yurt, and the funds to finish fully purchasing the property. Our hope is to raise the last \$500,000 by the end of this year. These funds will allow us to onboard the supplies for programming and give us the confidence to lay out the full community plan, including the building of three to four more houses, a barn, and a modest community center, where Riverflow can host community meals and inclusive cultural events.

My heart is filled with appreciation for all of you who have given this year—all of you are in the founding circle with us. We are truly grateful! Please help us with this final step towards manifesting a meaningful home for those who need intentional inclusivity; support us in our belief that every human being has the right to a dignified and loving place on this earth—a place where they are truly known for their gifts and celebrated for who they are.

Hannah Schwartz
Executive Director



THE LEADERSHIP TEAM ON THE GROUND



WILLIAM LESCENE

William Lescene is joining us from the Catskills in upstate New York, a place he has called home for over forty years. He brings with him a depth of experience in human services, both as a parent and as a direct service provider. William has a degree in applied science. He is a multi-talented person who has management experience in multiple fields such as food service, graphic arts, magazine layout, and human services. What stands out the most is his warm nature, his genuine interest in person-centered care, and a dedication to celebrating each person for who they are. He has been a house manager for The Arc of Delaware County, where he engaged in policy work and disability activism, which he can now apply to Riverflow.



HANNAH SCHWARTZ

In 1998 I drove south from Canada after being a volunteer in an intentional community, a small progressive program caring for individuals with developmental disabilities. I will never forget the feeling I had on the roads leading me deeper into the beauty of Vermont. On this first trip down to find Goddard College, the land and nature spoke home to me. Vermont has been my home ever since. I explored being a midwife, a teacher, and eventually became the co-founder of Heartbeat Lifesharing, a small community in the Northeast Kingdom. Heartbeat was a place where I could fully explore the meaning of community and the gifts of lifesharing with people of all abilities. It was a time of deep personal growth.

Over the last ten years, I was gifted the opportunity to pursue two Masters degrees, one in Special Education from Antioch New England, and the other in Social Work from the University of Vermont. I practiced social work in different settings over the last four years, but the call of lifesharing and intentional community stayed like an ember in my heart. Riverflow came towards me as a bright invitation that sparked my love and passion for disability activism. So I find myself in the leadership group working to bring this new community into being with a very special group of founding Friends, Board Members, Parents, and Coworkers. My heart is filled with the possibilities that this community can offer to those who will call it home, and what it can add to the system of care in the State of Vermont.

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM ON THE GROUND



SENECA GONZALEZ

Seneca Gonzalez comes to Riverflow with a wealth of knowledge and experience in both human services and intentional community/Camphill. She lived in Vermont as part of the carrying team at Heartbeet Lifesharing Camphill for twelve years. She is a social therapist, an artist, a Biographer, a creative and courageous thought generator, and is dedicated to alternative and inclusive living that celebrates diversity in all the ways it shows up. Seneca comes to us from Camphill Hudson, where she co-carried their day program and was a house manager for one of their homes for a year. She played a significant role in their inclusive theater program, doing the costume design and supporting with production. With over 15 years of experience in Camphill, as co-leader of the first household and Program Director, Seneca will allow Riverflow to emerge with depth and confidence.



RIVER PARKER

River Parker has spent the last five years working with neurodiverse adults in community and educational settings. In her work with neurodiverse populations, River has focused her attention at the intersection of gender identity, sexual orientation, and neurodiversity, while strengthening her knowledge and skill-base in community building, de-escalation, and mediation. River works as a Program Director for the Camphill Academy, a community-based, experiential learning program that offers an alternative pathway to a Bachelor's Degree. Through her work with the Camphill Academy, River has deepened and strengthened her connection to the mission of Camphill and the particularly meaningful form of community building found in these communities.

River is a Waldorf lifer, has a BA in English and Classics from the University of Puget Sound and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Vermont. River is trained in nonviolent communication (NVC), restorative practices (RP), and draws great inspiration from adrienne maree brown's Emergent Strategy. She comes to the Riverflow leadership team with many skills. She has played a critical role over the last eight months with the management of the major renovation project of the house at Riverflow and has been working tirelessly with tremendous enthusiasm, supporting the team through the complicated maze of building codes and keeping everything on track so that we can open in October.

WELCOME TO THE FOUNDING FRIENDS

DUNCAN, JESSE, CHARLIE, & CONNOR ARE ALL READYING THEMSELVES FOR A NEW CHAPTER OF LIFE. LEAVING HOME AND SCHOOL TO COME HELP WITH THE FOUNDING OF RIVERFLOW, EACH OF THEM BRINGS SPECIAL QUALITIES TO THE COMMUNITY.



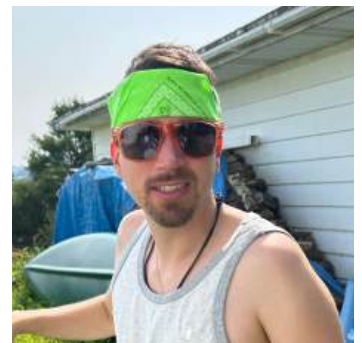
Duncan brings his love for animals in small-scale farm settings, and outdoor work, but don't be fooled--he also is a detailed artist, and how he loves live music! He will keep the beat, and play music right alongside the best musicians out there. He scours bookshelves for books of interest and spends hours carefully exploring the material. Duncan brings with him years of experience in intentional community and will be the inspiration for the creation of a small farm that he can pour his skills into.

Jesse is joining Riverflow from just down the road and comes looking for friends, connection, and the opportunity to learn about community life. His joy, fist-bumps and appreciation for music are bright spots in any day. He, too, is ready at any moment for a flash dance party! He is ready to make new friends, connect, and learn about his budding vocational interests. Jesse recently brought his friends from high school over to the property and was a proud tour guide, clearly expressing his enthusiasm for the future of the community. Jesse also loves Special Olympics as both a skier and a runner.



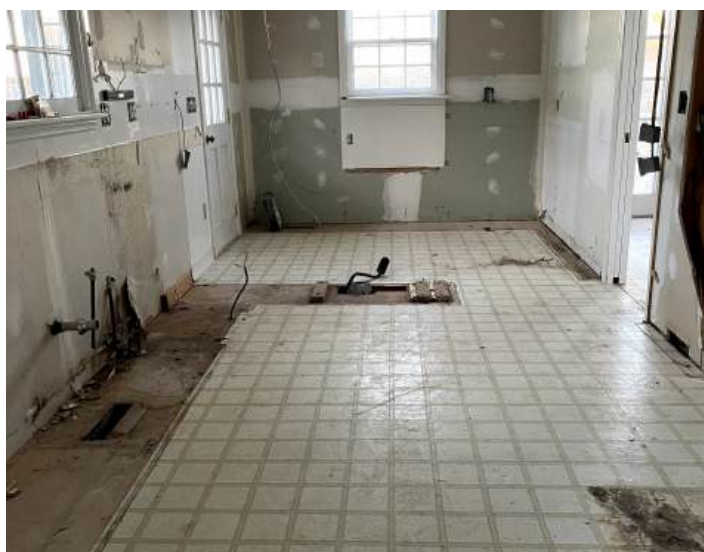
Charlie is finishing up his time in school and is looking forward to adult life. He loves to laugh, tease, tickle, and to party. Charlie, like Duncan, appreciates landscaping, and animals. He has experience farming and will bring his expertise with him. Charlie will continue honing his vocational skills at Riverflow, supporting us with the design and implementation of composting systems, food processing, and fiber arts.

Connor is moving to Riverflow after almost two decades of living at Heartbeet Lifesharing. He was part of the founding team at Heartbeet with Hannah Schwartz and expressed interest in supporting Riverflow in its burgeoning phase, both because of his personal need for a change and because he brings with him years of experience in intentional community. Connor is warm-hearted and truly caring, bringing with him many skills. He loves rhythm and routine, woodworking, and has expressed interest in being on the planning team for festivals, outings and outreach.



BEFORE

AFTER



HELP US TO THE FINISH LINE

We are truly grateful to all those who have supported us through the house renovations. If you have not given yet, now is the moment! We are getting ready to open the doors of our first therapeutic home on October 7th, and need your help with the final steps. With gifts from generous supporters like you, we will be ready to cross the finish line!

To keep the wheels turning, what we need most are the funds for two community cars. These will take us out into the community, for cultural events, volunteering, and to get to know our neighbors. We are aiming for **\$30,000** to purchase the community vehicles, one van and one CRV. Both vehicles need to be all wheel drive to keep us safe through the winter months.



We are working to raise the final funds to make the pond at Riverflow both beautiful and safe. In its current state, the water is stagnant and brings blackflies and mosquitoes. We are looking forward to getting the pond excavated, properly aerated, and then ready for a dock, making the pond a quiet place for enjoying the sound of water and celebrating the beauty of nature. The project to clean, aerate, and beautify the pond has been estimated at **\$18,000**.

We are also looking forward to renovating our small gazebo that is close to the pond. It is dilapidated but salvageable—put your name on the Gazebo! With **\$5,000**, we will be able to pull out all the rotten wood, scrape and paint the floor and sides, and replace the roof. This will be another wonderful place to tuck away for a quiet conversation or share a snack on a hot day.

One of the bigger projects that we had hoped to have for programming reasons is a yurt space—if you have never been in a yurt, I highly recommend it. These buildings are round and provide both shelter and connection to nature. Please see the website for more information on the yurt. This space will provide studio space for Candle Making, Felting / Fiber Arts and Herb drying for the healing arts. It is also a place we will use as a community meeting place until we have a community center. The estimated cost is **\$45,000**, which will get us a solid platform with concrete footers and the yurt.



WORKING TOWARDS BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE CAMPHILL MOVEMENT

Riverflow Community is deeply grateful to the Camphill movement for the inspiration it brings to us as we strive to support those who call us to be more inclusive and celebrate differences. Camphill stands out as a human-centered intentional community model, where people with developmental disabilities are recognized for their leadership qualities and skills, and where we are reminded to live in more harmony with each other. Riverflow is on the path to Camphill membership and we are grateful to Camphill Village Kimberton Hills for being our sponsoring community.



Riverflow is also working closely with the State of Vermont to integrate into its existing systems of care, while demonstrating the possibility for additional types of models for long-term, dignified homes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Riverflow Community team is pursuing licensure as a Therapeutic Community Residence (TCR), hoping to open our doors on October 7th of this year.



We will keep you up-to-date as we close in on the opening day!

Once again, thank you to the many supporters who have helped Riverflow become a reality—without you we would not have gotten this far.

For those who have been waiting to give there is no time like this critical moment of opening—we need your help.



WAYS TO GIVE

EXCITING NEWS! RIVERFLOW HAS RECEIVED ITS DESIGNATION AS A 501(C)(3) TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION.

RIVERFLOW COMMUNITY, INC. IS A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION. CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR ATTORNEY OR TAX/INVESTMENT PROFESSIONAL BEFORE MAKING ANY KIND OF CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION.

Gifts of Cash

Gifts of cash are the easiest and most direct way to make a contribution and are fully deductible for individuals who itemize their federal income tax return. If you make a cash, check, or credit card gift, you will be eligible for a deduction for the full value of your gift.

Mail a completed Donation Form with your check made payable to Riverflow Community to:

Riverflow Community
Attn: Development
57 Cedar Ln,
North Ferrisburgh, VT 05473

Donate Now Online

Donations can be made through the online portal on our website:

<https://www.riverflowcommunity.org/donate>

By Phone

If you would like to speak with someone at Riverflow personally, call our office at:

802-498-4180

Make a Pledge

Pledges are a great way to make a gift over time! Reach out to Hannah Schwartz and she will send you a pledge form:

hannah.s@riverflowcommunity.org

Matching Gifts

Many employers or former employers, if you are a retiree, will match your charitable contribution. This often doubles or even triples your initial gift. Obtain a matching gift form from your human resources department and enclose it with your contribution to Riverflow Community.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities (Stock)

If you gift stocks or bonds that you have owned for at least one year, you will be eligible for a deduction for the full mean market value of the security on the date that Riverflow receives it.

Reach out to Hannah Schwartz for more information on giving Appreciated Securities donations:

hannah.s@riverflowcommunity.org



THANKS FOR READING!



Riverflow
Community

WWW.RIVERFLOWCOMMUNITY.ORG