

RIVERFLOW



SPRING 2026

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

HANNAH SCHWARTZ

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters of Riverflow,

It is hard to believe that the snow has finally melted and that many of our songbirds have returned. The robin redbreast and red-winged blackbirds are singing our mornings into being once again. The birdfeeders are alive with clusters of returning birds settling back into their New England homes.

This Winter was the real deal—even for Vermonters. Snow blanketed the land for months, and the wind reminded us daily that windchill is no small thing. Brave morning crews ventured out to shovel pathways and entrances, sand and salt icy steps, and make the trek to care for the chickens. Even on the coldest days, the chickens gifted us with eggs, clucking steadily as we gathered them.

There is so much to celebrate as Spring calls us forward and the landscape softens into color.

Winter offers us a time to draw inward—to be together and to focus on festivals of light, warmth, and connection. Baking, candle-making, woodworking, felting, and the deeply meaningful work of lifesharing create a sense of togetherness that naturally shifts with the busyness of summer. I wish each of you could see the tables filled with abundant crafts: beautiful, skillful, heartfelt expressions of care and creativity. Every member of our community has contributed to this shared sense of purpose and productivity. We have also loved welcoming extended community members into our felting space. It has been a joy to share our work and witness new friends discovering the craft.

With Phase One of our community vision complete, we look around with awe and gratitude for what we have established on this beautiful piece of land: renovating the house into a bustling lifesharing home, clearing the pond to create a place for swimming, restoring the gazebo, adding a small administrative building, putting up a pole barn, building a sheep shed that will soon welcome four sheep, getting chickens, and now, thanks to our many givers who donated on Giving Tuesday, building a greenhouse to extend our growing season and expand vocational skill building opportunities. Each structure is a step toward our larger dream and demonstrates the widening circles of support raying in toward Riverflow. We feel a deep and heartfelt gratitude for our founding donor circle, dedicated builders, grantors, faithful parents, and our board. Your generosity brought this vision to life.

We are especially excited to share that our long-held dream of building a Yurt - a gathering space for our full community, for hosting events, and for welcoming more visitors to enjoy the wonders of Riverflow - is now becoming a reality. Thanks to the support of generous donors like you, adding this community space is now within reach.

After a winter spent completing site and civil engineering designs, securing local and state permits, and finalizing house plans, we are ready to take the next steps in growing Riverflow Community: building Home #2, which will make the space for us to welcome four new Friends and a full support team. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners at Barnard & Gervais and Krebs & Lansing



who were dedicated collaborators in this work and made the design and permitting process possible. Thank you also to everyone who supported this process with your enthusiasm, wisdom, faith, and financial resources! With permits in hand, we are now ready to move forward with site infrastructure work, if we can raise the final \$350,000 needed to sign contracts with Huntington Homes, an exceptional modular home company based in Vermont. With your support, construction could begin late Fall, with completion anticipated in Spring 2027. Help make it possible for four Friends, Brielle, Michael, Ella and Alec, to move to their new home!

Our world continues to face profound challenges; fear, uncertainty, marginalization, discrimination, war, and loss shape much of the human experience today. In times like these, it is easy to feel helpless. But here on the ground, in the daily life at Riverflow, we witness something different: connection, laughter, care, and genuine belonging. By supporting the creation of our second home, you

are helping make these experiences a reality for more people seeking the warmth, inclusion, and belonging of community.

To bring Home #2 to life, we must raise the final \$350,000 in order to secure our contract with Huntington Homes and begin site work construction.

Help us cross the finish line by making a gift today! See back page for all the ways you can give.

Opening Riverflow's second therapeutic home is about more than building a house, it is about fostering belonging and building a future rooted in dignity, community, and care.

With deep gratitude and hope,
Hannah Schwartz

THE

We are thrilled to share that we are officially moving ahead with the yurt—can you believe it? This long-held dream is becoming a reality, and it is only possible because of each of you.

Thanks to your generosity, this beautiful new space will allow us to welcome more people into the life of our community. It will provide much-needed indoor space for gathering, singing, celebrating festival life, yoga, dance, music-making, and so much more. The yurt will become a warm and vibrant center for connection, creativity, and shared experience throughout the year.

To everyone who helped bring this vision to life—thank you. Your support is already enriching lives and helping our community grow in meaningful and lasting ways.

YURT



Our yurt will look a lot like this!

MSW INTERNSHIP REFLECTIONS

BENNA TRACHTENBERG



When I came to Riverflow for the first time, I was nervously excited and unsure of what my academic/professional future held. The first year of UVM's MSW program is considered to be the generalist year, meaning that you can be placed within a practicum that may not reflect your prior experience or pre-determined professional direction. That being said, I had no experience in the world of disability; I had no idea what to expect from the experience, the Friends, or supervision.

I came in without many practical skills that I would need to be successful at Riverflow. I had never had the pleasure of meeting anyone for whom speech was not their primary method of communication. I knew nothing about AAC devices, I had never been strongly attuned to body language or physical cues, and I did not even know what Camphill was. There were countless strong learning moments, to say the least.

Graduate school was going to be hard, undoubtedly. I was worried about not being able to balance school workload, my part-time job, and relationships. I was scared that I was going to feel strapped for time, constantly working, never feeling like I had a chance for a break or respite. But just after my first week, I realized that Riverflow was not only going to be the highlight of every week, but one of the most informative, educational, and rewarding experiences I have ever had.

I was told on my first day that the Friends would become my most important teachers, and that could not have been more correct. I am leaving not only as a more confident social worker with a strong disability lens, but I feel deeply changed as a person. I have learned the importance of true accessibility, unconventional interventions, unconditional compassion, and working

as an impenetrable team. From watching how Hannah, River, and the incredible cohort of coworkers engage the Friends in crews and daily living with such grace and care, I gained knowledge of how to help Friends accomplish their goals and truly live life to the fullest.

My learning will never be done, and I will always be growing as a human and social worker. What I know for sure, though, is that the foundation of any therapeutic relationship is trust, that trust takes time, and I cannot thank Riverflow's Friends enough for opening their world and their hearts to me.

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HELP US BUILD HOME #2

Riverflow Community is working tirelessly to raise the final funds needed for Home #2. Thanks to the generosity of so many, we are closer than ever to making this vision a reality. To move forward and sign the final contract with Huntington Homes we must raise the remaining \$350,000. Huntington is ready to build this house for Riverflow — help us grow our community and bring this home to fruition. We have come so far, and this final stretch will carry us across the finish line. We invite you to be part of creating a lifelong home for Ella, Michael, Alec, and Brielle. This is truly a community effort, and every gift—large or small—will make all the difference. Please consider making a contribution and helping us build not just a house, but a home filled with the hustle and bustle of community life!



Ella will join us once Home #2 is finished!



A FAMILY'S STORY: WHY WE NEED RIVERFLOW FOR MICHAEL

CARMEN J. COLLEY

Michael was a planned baby. He was not an accident or a mistake. So when he was born with Down syndrome—without any prior indication, even with prenatal care—we were surprised, shocked, and overwhelmed. Yet by the very next morning, those feelings were joined by something deeper: joy at his arrival and the life beginning within our family.

With two older sisters from a previous marriage, our blended family quickly circled the wagons. We loved Michael fiercely from the very beginning.

With encouragement from siblings and grandparents, Michael met and exceeded many physical milestones. He began walking at 17 months. Our entire family learned sign language alongside him. His first word was “cow,”



and as a toddler he delighted in Thomas the Train, elephants, and cows.

We moved to Vermont with intention—because we believed we could build the best possible community here for Michael’s well-being and happiness.

Mild-mannered and full of humor, Michael did well in school. With strong support, he learned to read, write, and do basic math. In high school, he participated in Special Olympics and developed life skills through a supported work placement at Metro Rock.

But as time moved on, his sisters went off to college and built lives out of state. After graduation, the structure of school and the connection of his job were gone along with his strong social life with siblings. Michael’s once rich and active daily life changed dramatically. It was at this turning point that we discovered life-sharing communities.

As Michael’s parents, we began to think about the future—about what would sustain him not just physically, but emotionally and socially, as we age. We came to understand that a life-sharing community is not simply a housing option. It is a pathway to continued growth, dignity, and belonging.

Riverflow is, quite simply, a miracle for families like ours. We share our story for those who seek to understand why Riverflow is so essential for Vermonters with developmental disabilities. Being with peers in a shared community reassures each person that they belong—that they are valued and, in fact, needed.

This sense of belonging brings peace. It brings joy. It brings a meaningful life.

As Riverflow prepares to open its second life-sharing home—the home that will welcome Michael—we ask you to consider making a meaningful financial contribution to bring this vision to life.

Your support will directly help create a safe, vibrant, and lasting home where Michael and three other peers like him can continue to grow, build relationships, and live with dignity and purpose. This is not simply an investment in a building; it is an investment in a lifetime of belonging.



Please join us in making this possible—for Michael, and for many others who deserve a place where they are truly known and loved.



ADVENTURE CREW





ADBLISS

A YEAR OF ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES

BY JOHN BURGER

Adventure crew initially started as an excuse to get the guys out in the dead of winter. Short days with frigid temps had a few of our friends feeling antsy and looking for a way to burn off some energy. Nate and myself would take Jesse and Duncan to the gym to work out and swim. As our crew grew, so did our adventures. We've gone from the core group of four to up to twelve adventurers on our larger outings. Throughout the process we've found a balance between leisure and vigor, the familiar and pushing our edges to try something new, immersion in nature and recreational entertainment. Here's a look at some of our highlights since the beginning of Adventure Crew!

In the beginning, it was all about the Edge. Without the Edge Fitness Center and Bliss Bee, adventure crew

wouldn't be what it is. The folks working at the Edge and at Bliss Bee have been incredibly gracious and supportive of our friends and that is what keeps us going back. Swimming, working out and getting a burger or hot dog remains our rainy day back up plan. Jesse has a blast horsing around in the pool and lounging in the hot tub, while Duncan continues to impress us with his abilities in the weight room. Connor and Brielle began to join us and race each other on the bikes and ellipticals.

On nicer days, our crew was able to explore the bountiful wild areas of our state. Vermont State Parks supported our friends and staff with some free admission into the parks. The crew was able to go fishing, swimming, hiking and snowshoeing all while getting to know the varied landscapes of the Champlain Valley area. We tried on some Nordic Skis at Sleepy Hollow and had some tasty Red Hen croissants. As the trails iced up, we took



up sledding when the weather was favorable. Snake Mountain, Mount Philo, Button Bay, Camels Hump, Mount Mansfield, Wheeler Park, Lake Iroquois, Lake Champlain and of course our local favorite, Raven's Ridge, are some of the places we've been able to explore this year.

Yet, all adventures need not be type 2 fun. The group has had a blast embracing the more leisurely side of Adventure Crew: we've gone to see movies, learn about the natural history and ecosystems of Vermont at places like Audubon Society and Echo Center, trampolined at Get Air, drank hot chocolate under the Winter Lights of Shelburne Museum, played with Dinosaurs at the Expo

Center and gone bowling to name a few! We followed the rhythms of the seasons through our adventures. Pumpkin patch, apple picking and corn maze in the fall, cutting down our Christmas tree in winter, maple creemees when spring finally began to poke its head out, and harvesting a true bounty of fresh fruits from the local farms in the heat of summer.

What once was just a weekly gym outing has now become a weekly highlight. The Riverflow crew is always looking forward to the next big outing. The latest chatter around the house has been about the upcoming trip to Jay Peak's waterpark. We are also looking forward to connecting with Vermont Adaptive and Green Mountain Adaptive to try and coordinate some kayaking, biking, and perhaps even some rock climbing this summer. Regardless of where the adventure takes us, be it up a mountain or downtown Burlington, the Riverflow crew always brings a beautiful energy along with them, making friends and memories along the way.



LIFE AT



RIVERFLOW







MARISSA PAPPALARDO

RIVERFLOW'S NEW GARDEN MANAGER

Marissa is a recent graduate of the University of Vermont's Masters of Social Work program. Prior to this experience, she spent 6 years working on small organic farms, growing vegetables and flowers. It was in these roles that Marissa's love of tending to her community and ecosystem first began. She has continued



to foster this love through her work as a yoga teacher and as a social work student and will now be bringing it all together at Riverflow.

In her free time, Marissa enjoys spending time with loved ones, swimming and reading!

WAYS TO GIVE

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>

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

GIFTS OF APPRECIATED SECURITIES

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

BY PHONE

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

802-498-4180

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.

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.



Riverflow aspires to create wholeness in life for everyone who is part of and connected to the community. United by meaningful work, community members with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities form friendships, gain vocational skills, and pursue dignified, self-directed lives.

Find us online at riverflowcommunity.org