

RECOVERY ACT and USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT HELP VERMONT FOODBANK EXPAND SERVICES TO SOUTHERN VERMONT

Expanding on their mission to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships that will end hunger in Vermont, the Vermont Foodbank recently opened a 21,000 square foot Regional Distribution Center in Brattleboro, Vermont.

The Regional Distribution Center, under the direction of Maurice Casey, is establishing itself to serve food shelves, senior centers, shelters, after-school programs, and meal sites throughout Windham, Windsor, and Bennington counties.

The new distribution center, located in the former Book Press building, off Route 5, in Brattleboro, VT, began operation in 2009. Their first priority was to develop this facility for the food distribution services, with office, training and other service space to be developed later.

With assistance from USDA Rural Development, the Vermont Foodbank received a Community Facility grant, backed by Recovery Act funds, to purchase and install a 40' x 23' x 18' freezer unit and a 50' x 23' x 18' cooler. They will also reduce their energy costs, with temperature sensors linked to the fan controller. The fans will bring in fresh, cold air when the outside temperature is below the required cooler temperature.



Area Director, Jon-Michael Muise, walks along the exterior of the Vermont Foodbank's Regional Distribution Center's cooler/freezer unit financed by USDA Rural Development. The unit is contained within the 21,000 sq. foot facility.

The refrigerator/freezer units allow the Foodbank Distribution Center to take-in more product, and keep it for a longer period of time. They will be able to serve an estimated one million or more pounds of food, which equates to about 700,000 meals, through over 50 agencies in Southern Vermont from this facility. .

This facility will be receiving food from donations received from distributors, food drives, and national food programs. They have expanded the Vermont Foodbank Gleaning Program to this facility. This program harvests excess or unmarketable produce from local farms to distribute through its network programs. They are already bringing in fresh produce from local farms and gardens, providing Vermonter's in-need with local, fresh produce.

The Regional Distribution Center employs a Warehouse Coordinator, Chris Thayer. He began with them in April 2009. A former employee of a recently closed hardware/home center, Chris has found a

great job that he is happy to be a part of.

Vermont Foodbank's Regional Distribution Center in Brattleboro has plans for continual growth, offering more services to the community. One such plan is the addition of a commercial kitchen, which will allow the Foodbank to replicate the Community Kitchen Program. A program of Feeding America—the national network of food banks, Community Kitchen is a 14-week culinary job training program that prepares unemployed and underemployed men and women for sustainable careers in the food service industry. Funding for the Community Kitchen is provided, in part, by a Next Generation (Act 46) Grant from the Vermont Department of Labor.

USDA Rural Development looks forward to seeing this project to grow and anticipates being a part of their continued success.



Apples gleaned from Scott Farm, a local farm, at the distribution center, before disbursing to network programs.