

SEVCA History: 50 Years of Community Action

Aug 20, 1964	LBJ signs Economic Opportunity Act creating Community Action Agencies (CAAs)
Sep/Oct 1964	Vermont established 1 st state Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to accept federal grants for local War on Poverty programs.
Thru Apr/May 1965	Community Action Groups (CAGs) formed, first in Windsor, then in Windham county, to organize and establish a Community Action Program in this area eligible to receive federal funds and operate anti-poverty programs
May 1965	With guidance / support from Paul Guare (OEO), Windham Co. Extension, and Tom Davis (Windsor Co. CAG), Rev. James Young, Frances Silvernall & William Graham, original committee members from Putney, met to explore establishment of CAP in SE VT.
May 12, 1965	SEVCA is incorporated as Vermont non-profit: Incorporators – Francis C. Daigre, James Howland, Clifford R. Vermilyn, Frank H. Dearborn, Hazel D. Frey.
May 1965	Initial development grant of \$20K was applied for by the SEVCA Board.
May 20, 1965 – Mar 1968	Thomas C. (Tom) Davis, who worked for the VT Alcoholic Rehabilitation Service, and the son of the future VT Governor Deane Davis, was hired as 1 st SEVCA Exec Dir for a salary in \$8 to \$10K range. He stayed for about 3 years.
1965	Bill Schmidt was 2 nd person hired, as Coordinator @ \$6,500/yr. Staff also included full & part-time secretaries. In 1968 Schmidt then became 1 st ED of Windham Regional Planning Commission, the 1 st RPC in VT, after serving as Board Chairman and resident planner.
1965 – 66/67?	Office was in Rockingham Town Hall for 1-2 years, then moved to 39 The Square in Bellows Falls (Salmon & Nostrand building).
1965/6? – 83 or beyond	Charlie Russell was hired as 1 st Outreach Director (through at least David Deen's tenure (1983) and perhaps longer.
Summer 1965	Joyce Strom & Ann Raynolds started first Head Start as summer program in 1965 at Union School in Springfield.
1966?	Tom Davis left to become director of OEO, and later became Sen. Leahy's VT office staff director and then head of the U.S Dept. of Labor's New England office. He's also the author of several books on VT history.
Mar 1968 – Feb 1971	SEVCA went through a period of short-lived and interim Exec Dirs, all staying less than a year, including: David O'Neill (3/68–1/69), John Coffin (11/69– 9/70), George Kaplan (interim) (9/70–11/70), and Sid Gerstenblatt (interim) (11/70–2/71).
1968 – 71	SEVCA / HS staff worked to organize a Poor People's Congress & welfare rights groups in VT with help from George Wiley, ED of National Welfare Rights Organization, but couldn't get funding from NWRO to sustain efforts.
1968 – 69	Ann Raynolds hired as Development Dir. to obtain federal funds for full-year Head Start. With Edgar May's help, funds secured and HS became full-year program.
1969 – 72	Joyce Strom 1 st HS Dir. When she left in 1972, Ann Raynolds took over.
1970	Free clothing room established in Bellows Falls as part of Outreach Program, which evolved into 1 st Thrift Store (Rainbow Room?). Moved to Chester after fire in 1978.

1970 – 1999	<p>After several years of turmoil, controversy, & leadership turnover at SEVCA, a group created an independent organization, Consumer Controlled Community Child Care (5-Cs), to receive HS funds for Windham & Windsor counties, but worked closely with SEVCA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS funds combined with Title XX funds for day care and special ed; 5-Cs owned 3 buildings (Springfield, Rockingham, Proctorsville); HS & coordinated care programs flourished in those towns, as well as HS programs in Brattleboro & Hartford. • HS hired / trained many parents and other low-income people and initiated one of 1st birth-to-3 year-old HS-funded home-visiting programs – the Parent-Teacher Program.
Mar 1971–74	SEVCA entered period of greater stability with hiring of Michael (Mick) Beaudoin, formerly Peace Corps Liaison to community groups in the US and ED of a CAA in D.C.
1972 – 73	David Deen hired for Reach-Up-type program, supervising housing rehab crew of CETA workers, consisting of youth – high school dropouts who had 1 st encounter with the law
1973 – 74	Arab Oil Embargo / Oil Crisis gave rise to 1 st Weatherization crew, also CETA workers
1974	Mick Beaudoin resigned as ED. David Deen applied but not chosen. Initial choice declined due to SEVCA's uncertain financial condition and funding prospects. Deen then hired by Board under President Terri Lamb, after initial rejection
1974 – 83	David Deen served as ED. Highlights of his tenure included:
1974 – Present	1 st Energy Conservation (Weatherization) Program – Through 1980-81, did 433 homes, including 104 units at Southview in Springfield. There was some controversy and problems later on, but program rebuilt and became among strongest in the state. CETA crews did most of the work, with guidance from 5 Green Thumb workers
1974-81?	SEVCA Stoves – CETA project: Started by guy from Marlboro, Community Services Administration (CSA) gave major grant; evaluated as most efficient, nationally recognized; demand grew, bought building on Rt. 5 in Westminster to produce commercially. Change in fed. Funding (block grants) changed attitude; state dead set against using funds for commercial purpose, didn't renew funding, project ended.
1975 – 78	<p>Ellen Paquette served 1st of many SEVCA roles, providing the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food & Nutrition: Started food shelf at BF site; enrolled families in WIC and provided rides to clients to get WIC, Food Stamps, etc.; canvassed Brattleboro schools to assess need for school lunch program. • Taught traditional skills to women, including sewing, canning, gardening, etc.
	State Social Services staff provided services onsite at SEVCA
	Statewide Fair Housing Initiative and Mobile Home Residents Assn. organized
	Homestead Non-Profit Housing, Inc. created to develop affordable rental housing ; 23 units build or renovated in Westminster, Putney, Vernon, Newfane
1970s – 1991/2	Operated USDA Commodity Food Distribution Program in multiple sites, until taken over by Our Place
1979	“Stop 5 Gallon Slush” Program – Worked with high school dropouts to get GEDs while employing them to install low-flow water saving devices in low-income homes.

1979 – ?	Job Corps Industry Work Experience Program and Nat'l Demonstration Water Project coordinated in VT by SEVCA to train and employ water & wastewater plant operators
1979/80? – 1983?	Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) – Directed by Tony Kulik, helped low-income residents & communities obtain financial & legislative support to install safe drinking water and sanitary waste disposal systems.
1979/80	Farmer's Home Administration 502/504 Programs – Helped obtain loans/grants for water / wastewater needs, worked with VT Law School to solve problems with applications and appeal denials.
1979 – 1993?	Nutshell Food Co-op & Community Center in Wardsboro, a SEVCA project, was founded and directed by Christel Holden, eventually becoming an independent non-profit. It served as space for SEVCA's West River Valley Outreach office. Christel & Cindy Holden, and Paul Rush served as Outreach Workers, and Lois Bousquet worked for the Co-op as a Green Thumb worker.
1980 – ?	Community Food & Nutrition Program – Provided range of services, including: Summer Feeding Program; Food Shelf Network (12); Good Food Project; Community Gardens (9); Food Preservation Workshops; Gleaning Project; VT Food Coalition.
1980? – ?	Transportation program begun, arranging rides with volunteer drives for Medicaid transportation; connected with VT Public Transportation Assn (VPTA).
1981	Outreach program to help households with the construction of solar greenhouses to benefit from the energy and cost savings of passive solar heat.
1981	Action for Children – Program to reduce child abuse / neglect through education, training of school personnel, and coordination of community resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and provided assistance to parent support groups • Organized Child Protection Teams in Rockingham & Springfield and provided backup support to serve families at risk of abuse / neglect.
1981	Change in fed. funding structure from CSA to Community Services Block Grant (CSBG); difficult transition to state funding; state law ensured pass-through to CAAs.
1983	Thrift Store opened in Bellows Falls
1983 – ?	After resigning as ED, David contracted through SEVCA as fiscal conduit for \$50K Aetna grant to help establish statewide community foundation; so SEVCA contributed to creation of VT Community Foundation.
1983 – 1990	John Durgin, former Peace Corps Volunteer Coordinator in Africa, Field Trainer / Coordinator of VT Fair Housing Coalition under SEVCA for 3 years and SEVCA's Special Projects Coordinator, replaced David Deen as ED upon his resignation.
1980's (?)	Windsor Outreach Office open
Mid-1980's	Rural Older Workers Employment Service provided
Feb 1984	Fire destroyed the "Cray Building" in Bellows Falls, which was SEVCA's headquarters at the time. Following fire, office moved to Buckley Building on Bridge Street in BF
1985 – 86	Carpentry, other building trades & non-traditional job training program for women started
1988–Present	Vermont Job Start initiated, creating Micro Business Development Program

1988–Present	Tonia White started at SEVCA; worked in Weatherization, Transportation, Job Start, Outreach, and Thrift Stores.
1989 – 91	Homelessness Prevention Outreach Program started, staffed by Donna Stevens and Todd Clough
1990	SEVCA’s Rainbow Thrift Store moved to 45 Rockingham St.; Tonia takes over as Mgr.
1990 – 91	Major focus of Outreach program was on raising funds for fuel assistance and advocating against funding cuts for that and other needed services
1990 – 91	SEVCA staff Bonnie Price & Myrtle Birsky worked on starting up the Shareheat (CVPS) and Warmth (GMP) funds to increase the available crisis fuel assistance resources.
1990 – 93	Judith Sutphen served as ED. Formerly Prog Dir for Ms. Foundation for Women, Development Dir for Grassroots International, & Acting Dir of Boston Women’s Fund.
1990 – 2011	SEVCA began development of a Community Land Trust, coordinated by Andy Broderick and Bonnie Price (Family Services Director), which became Rockingham Area CLT.
1990–Present	SEVCA collaborated with Rockingham CLT, Central Elementary School, and Windham NE Supervisory Union on development of Parks Place in Bellows Falls. SEVCA hired Barbara Ternes to serve as its director until funding was raised for it to become independent. The only director to-date, Barbara is retiring in June 2015.
1991–Present	Donna Stevens started Our Place Drop-in Center and SEVCA transferred its food shelf over to it. Donna worked with 2 high school girls to start the Community Kitchen operating in Immanuel Episcopal Church.
Early 1990’s – 2000	Medicaid Transportation program evolves into separately incorporated Town & Village Bus, still co-located with and overseen by SEVCA, providing full-range transportation services; initially under contract with VT Dept. of Mental Health.
1992/3 – 95	Three new managers of major departments hired: Gloria Dawson (Family Services), Ted Bolognani (Finance), Harald Schmidtke (Weatherization). SEVCA initially in debt, some programs inadequately funded, behind in achieving goals; new leadership pulled agency together, got out of debt, started to build reserves, and achieve goals.
1993/4–95/6?	Tenants’ Rights Program started
1993 – 2007?	Tonia White & BF Family Services Worker Bette Harrison started Holly Jolly Wish List to provide holiday food baskets, children’s toys, and winter coats & boots.
1993–Present	Thrift Store opened at Hartford Recycling Center
1994 – 2002	Gloria Dawson, formerly SEVCA Outreach Director, hired as ED upon sudden departure of Judith Sutphen due to complications related to adopting a child in Central America.
1995? – ?	Employment Readiness / Welfare-to-Work Program started
1995 – 97	Some programs were cut or dropped, including: USDA Surplus Food, Tenant’ Rights, & Green Thumb; CDBG Housing Improvement moved to RACLT
1997	SEVCA started Summer Lunch pilot program at Bellows Falls Central School, run by Tonia’s grandmother, Caro Duval
1998–Present	SEVCA rehabbed Green Mountain Printing building and moved from Bridge Street in Bellows Falls into current main office at 91 Buck Drive, Westminster.

1999	Ellen Paquette returns to SEVCA as Crisis Fuel worker, and then as CF Coordinator
1999/2000 – Present	5-Cs gave up Head Start Program. Brattleboro EES applied for and received grant for Windham Co., SEVCA for Windsor Co., and again became HS provider.
2000/01	Town & Village Bus spun off as independent non-profit, relocating to its own office.
2002 – 2004	Deb Osienski, formerly SEVCA's Finance Director, replaced retiring Gloria Dawson as ED. SEVCA then endured tumultuous financial issues that were leading to serious decline. Weatherization Director Harald Schmidtke became Interim ED with support from Finance, other management team members, and the Board Executive Committee, helping to keep SEVCA stable through this challenging period.
Oct. 2004 – Present	Steve Geller, an ED in NH for 18 years, and working in CAAs for 22 years, was hired as Interim ED to replace Osienski, and Vern Lindamood was hired out of retirement as Interim CFO. They worked with Harald, other management team members, and Executive Committee to provide needed leadership to turn SEVCA around and establish longer-term stability. Vern retired and returned twice more, then retired for good in 2013. Steve has remained uninterrupted as ED to-date.
2009 – 11	Federal Stimulus funding (ARRA) provided significant level of new funds to expand / develop new programs. SEVCA expanded existing programs (Weatherization, Family Services, Textile Recycling) and created a range of new programs (Emergency Home Repair, Housing Stabilization, Vermont Green, Working Bridges, Employment & Training, etc.).
2009 – 12	SEVCA and other VT CAPs take on VT's General Assistance (GA) Program to help state out of a jam involving non-compliance with federal funding requirements. After 2½ years of fighting with state over program conditions / restrictions and lack of local authority to determine eligibility & benefits, state took program back.
2011 – 2013/14	SEVCA responded quickly to help victims of Tropical Storm Irene, had the earliest relief & recovery case managers in the field, provided leadership in the creation of local Long Term Recovery Committees, received a major statewide recovery grant from The Rotary Foundation, and became a key partner in the state's long-term recovery response.
2014–Present	Funding has become tighter after end of ARRA, Disaster Recovery, CVPS / GMP Merger funds, and SEVCA has become leaner and more efficient, working on diversifying funding, finding greater efficiencies, and generally doing more with less