

# MARTHA'S VINEYARD DONORS COLLABORATIVE

## 2009 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

*SUPPORTING MARTHA'S VINEYARD BY STRENGTHENING NON-PROFITS*

### By The Numbers: Recession on The Vineyard

**1,005** Vineyarders (11.1% of the workforce) were unemployed this winter, up 67% from last winter.

**486** families representing 860 people (including 170 children) visited the food pantry this winter. Total visits increased 22%.

**216** people received services at CONNECT to End Violence in May 2009, up from 90 last October.

**175** families are on the waiting list for rental assistance. This number has grown as incomes drop and more qualify. Currently 77 families are in the program.

**142** applications for fuel assistance for people under 60. That's over twice last winter's number and includes a lot of construction workers and real estate agents.

**100%** increase in the number of students eligible for free lunch at one island school from April 2008 to April 2009.

**56%** of Vineyard non-profits had a decrease in contributions this winter.

**50%** drop in Edgartown building permits this winter (no wonder so many construction people are out of work).

**48%** drop in the real estate market (value of real estate sold, based on Land Bank fees between 2007 and expected fiscal 2010).

**33%** of Vineyard non-profits expect to incur a deficit this year.

**10** people were homeless this winter, up from 2-3 historically.

**?** the number of people that had to leave the island for financial reasons.

### "...The Tough Get Going"

As one non-profit Board member put it when asked about the recession, "I have always said that it is hard to live on the Vineyard year-round, now it's harder than ever."

Unemployment was over 11% this winter, and with our high cost of living many are not able to afford the basics: food, heat and housing. Our health and human services agencies are seeing the human toll this takes in the form of increased alcohol/drug abuse, a record increase in reports of domestic violence and a growing homeless population.

The good news is that the Vineyard and its non-profit community aren't about to let the economy damage this place we all love. They've responded with a "... the tough get going" attitude to quote a Board President, and as the following stories show they are doing a remarkable job.

**The Homeless.** Connie Teixeira gives back to the Island through her involvement with several organizations including the Tisbury Senior Center where she serves free meals. Like many, she was surprised to learn we have a growing homeless problem when a regular visitor to the Center told her of his plight last December. She quickly realized that being homeless on the Vineyard was much tougher than being homeless in a city because there were no programs, emergency shelters or facilities here to help them through the winter. They had to fend for themselves. She decided she had to do something about it and ever since, she's been tirelessly advocating and getting help for our homeless; so much so that she was recently appointed Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Homeless Affairs. (continued on p. 2)



Connie Teixeira, homeless advocate, serves food at the Tisbury Senior Center.

### "The Going Gets Tough..."

56% of Vineyard non-profits experienced a decrease in contributions this winter and 19% saw them decrease greatly, according to our May survey\*. Most believe it's going to get worse; they feel the Vineyard may be lagging the rest of the country and has not seen the full effect of the recession. We know the State budget cuts for fiscal 2010 are enormous, but we won't know how bad the rest of the year will be until the end of summer since most of the island's fundraising happens in July and August.

Fortunately many non-profits have taken important steps to stay viable. It's no longer business as usual. Here are some examples of the recession's effect and how different non-profits responded. A few organizations requested anonymity.

**The Martha's Vineyard Chamber Music Society (MVCMS)** is determined not to let the music die in the face of the current recession. (continued on p.3)  
\*complete survey at [mvdonors.org](http://mvdonors.org)



Campers imitate jellyfish at Felix Neck. The camp needs scholarships for local kids

## Our Island & Philanthropy

The Vineyard is struggling like the rest of the nation as the recession takes its toll and tests our strength. To find out how much of a toll, we conducted a survey of Vineyard non-profits in May. The findings are included in the adjoining articles and on our website but the message is clear: •We can't give up, the needs are greater than ever.

•To the extent there were reserves they are dwindling and need replenishing.  
•Non-profits are working hard to prove worthy of our donations and taking steps to make themselves economically viable and survive.

The non-profit community is essential to preserving the character of this island we all love. Although their spirit is willing the economic challenge is great. These organizations need our continued support as donors and volunteers if they are to survive.

### How Can You Help?

Give to your favorite Vineyard charities. Our on line Directory of Non-Profits has detailed information on the full range of island organizations.

Include the Vineyard in your annual giving and estate plans.

Give to the Permanent Endowment Fund, the island's Community Foundation, if you wish to make a lasting contribution to the island. Call Ralinda Lurie, Executive Director at 508-338-4665.

Volunteer or join a Board (see article on page 4)

promotions and collections. The Food Pantry closed in April, but this year the need continues so a group of volunteers, supported by the **Vineyard Committee on Hunger** will distribute food through the summer.

**Elderly Support. Vineyard Village At Home** is a new non-profit that enables seniors to stay at home safely, rather than move to more expensive assisted living facilities. They do this by finding builders, handymen, health aides, cooks, etc. who provide services at reduced rates and through a large corps of volunteer drivers. Members pay a fee, but the organization also counts on donations. Starting a non-profit in this environment isn't easy but their only costs are one employee, the Program Coordinator, and overhead. Like many island non-profits, the Coordinator works from home and their volunteer President keeps the books and pays the bills.

**Animal Rescue.** Finally, the Vineyard's first non-profit casualty of the recession came when the MSPCA suddenly announced in February that due to financial problems with their endowment, the Vineyard shelter would be closed. Determined not to lose a facility for which there is a real need, the County stepped in and quickly put together a plan to keep the center running, but at a deficit. So the facility stayed open under new management, but with the need for \$35,000 in donations and a viable long term plan. Vineyard donors came through despite the recession and the funds were raised in the first month of local operation.

Indeed it appears that on the Vineyard the tough got going.

## ....The Tough Get Going (Continued from page 1)

Connie talked to a lot of people in her search for help. She works closely with **MV Community Services** as many of the homeless have mental health or substance abuse problems. Connie worked with a network of churches that serve community suppers so the homeless can get hot meals 6 days a week. She created a Homeless Fund (donations are made through the Island Affordable Housing Fund) and the money is used to provide emergency shelter at an inn or hotel for a few nights during the coldest months. After that, the homeless person is better off at a place with more resources, and the fund pays to send them to the Cape and an excellent non-profit shelter.

With Vineyard families losing their homes to foreclosure Connie is concerned about handling a larger population this fall. She wants to create a temporary warming shelter for winter evenings when the Senior Centers, libraries and other daytime refuges have closed. Connie also needs donations of warm blankets. (They can be taken to the Airport Laundromat, which will launder and package them.)

**Domestic Violence/Substance Abuse/Counseling.** Last fall as Vineyard unemployment started to increase there was a parallel increase in demand for services at **MV Community Services' Island Counseling** and **CONNECT to End Violence** programs as stress from financial problems took its toll on Vineyard families. The number of domestic violence clients more than doubled from October 2008 to May 2009 when they helped 216 people. Community Services offers mental health and substance abuse programs regardless of ability to pay, and the Domestic and Sexual Violence programs are free. At the same time, Community Services state funding was cut significantly, putting tremendous pressure on the budget. They implemented a hiring freeze but didn't touch these important programs. Julia Burgess, Executive Director says that services to their consumers come first, "They depend on us."

In this situation it's impossible to make ends meet. To stay true to their mission and help Vineyarders during this crisis, Community Services has cut what they can but are operating at a deficit. Fortunately, they have built reserves for just this purpose, but they have decreased because of the stock market and if used too long, could jeopardize Community Services long-term survival.

**Women Empowered** offers free education in life skills to men and women to help them through stressful financial times. They teach basic problem solving, budgeting, checkbook balancing, and job search skills. This small, mostly volunteer organization experienced an uptick in the number of clients last year, and with the help of a grant from the **Permanent Endowment Fund** they trained 6 facilitators to handle the increased demand.

**Food Pantry.** Demand at the Food Pantry hit record levels this winter with average visits per week increasing 25%. The Pantry assisted 460 families representing over 860 people and including over 170 children. The most heartening part, however, is how the community came together and made record donations of food and money so the Food Pantry didn't have to tap its endowment, as it had to in 7 of the past 11 years. The Food Pantry successfully partnered with a wide variety of Vineyard people, non-profits, supermarkets, schools, businesses and churches to run clever and effective

## The Going Gets Tough...(Continued from page 1)

At the end of 2008, its board, grappling with slightly reduced revenue and the loss of one concert sponsorship, made a strategic decision to reduce key budget items including salaries by as much as 20-25%. They didn't know what would happen in 2009 but wanted to be prepared in case summer revenues dropped significantly. Even though the artist budget has been cut they made sure to put together an exciting schedule including a world premiere, and they are also able to continue their scholarship and instrument lending programs for Vineyard students.

Many Vineyard non-profits did the same thing this winter: evaluated their programs, set priorities and implemented contingency plans. Our survey also shows that Vineyard non-profits making cuts were not afraid to make tough decisions; 43% reduced programs or services, 20% reduced hours of operation and 77% took some form of salary/staffing reduction (freezes, cuts and layoffs).

### Others are feeling the pinch:

**Rick Bausman at the Drum Workshop:** "Several contributors were unable to fulfill their pledges to us this year. This effectively left us high and dry for the last quarter. Our director has continued without pay, we suspended plans to hire an assistant, the board is doubling its efforts to find funding, and we have scraped enough to pay the bills and stay afloat. However, our programs have actually increased due to high demand, and we feel inspired to respond if we can without being irresponsible to the health of the organization."

**Anonymous Human Service Agency:** "We're seeing more clients and managing more complicated situations with less staff. Direct client services are our priority, which leaves less time for fundraising and grantwriting -- resulting in a Catch-22. Since we are so small to begin with -- now down to 3 FTEs -- at some point we will have to curtail our services; a terrible problem for our clients since we provide safety net services not available elsewhere on Island."

### One non-profits' future hangs in the balance:

**Martha's Vineyard Center For Dispute Resolution's** (formerly MV Mediation) primary source of funding was discontinued by the state. It paid for their office and part time staff. If they can't get a grant that would allow them to continue for a few more years, and they aren't counting on it, they face a big decision. They could shut their doors or limit their services to Small Claims Court as a reconstituted all volunteer organization. They learn about the grant in July.

### Some Vineyard non-profits have different attitudes about the economy:

"Our organization is so small and our financial status so miniscule that the recession has no effect on us whatsoever."

"Over the past five years, when the economy was good, we established a financial reserve. Although we do not need it yet, we have enough to sustain us for two years."

"When there's an economic downturn, it certainly affects us; but somehow we adjust and try to live within our means to survive."

Other Vineyard non-profits are less dependent on contributions and more dependent on volunteers. Richard Paradise runs the **Martha's Vineyard International Film Festival** which is 100% volunteer, including himself. He's a strong believer in volunteerism, "MV runs on volunteerism - its infectious and a cure-all," and he's right that the entire Vineyard community depends on volunteer support for its programs, fundraising and Boards (see story on page 4 ).

It's very clear that all Vineyard non-profits are driven by deep passions. One Board President wasn't too worried about the economy because, "we've always operated on determination!"

## The Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative

(MVDC) is a group of donors working together to strengthen the Vineyard's non-profit community in order to enrich the character of the island we love. The MVDC strengthens Vineyard non-profits by:

- Publicly advocating for them;
- Offering workshops, technical and other support to help them improve their own capabilities, and
- Getting them more money by educating donors about the importance of island non-profits, the great work they do and their significant problems and needs;

The Donors Collaborative is self funded by its Board, does not solicit funds for itself, does not choose among organizations to support, and does not provide access to donors without their permission.

## Recession Dominos Hurt Vineyard Families

Pressure on the school budget lead the Oak Bluffs School to close for the summer to save custodial and utility costs. This meant that the popular **YMCA** summer camp would no longer be able to operate there. The YMCA summer camp is one of the most affordable on Island and acts as a low cost source of childcare during the summer months when many Vineyard families work long hours and make most of their money.

Despite an exhaustive search, the Y was unable to find space and will not operate the camp until next year when its new facility opens, leaving more than 90 Island families looking for alternatives. Unfortunately the other island camps are more expensive so financially strapped Vineyard families are asking them for scholarships because they can't afford the cost of other childcare.

According to Susan Bellincampi of **Felix Neck**, "We have almost \$6,000 in scholarship requests for our camp and about 1/5th of that amount available to give out. The applicants are our neighbors, friends, trades people, service industry employees, etc. - everyday Vineyarders. We're working hard to find creative ways to fund a camp experience for every child but we need help."

## The Vineyard Gets Its Own Grant Writing Center

Grant Resource Network-Martha's Vineyard (GRN-MV), the new free grant resource center, provides a welcome leg up to time- and money-strapped Vineyard non-profits. It contains important resources, which were previously only available in Boston. The program is a partnership of the Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative, the Oak Bluffs Public Library, and Associated Grant Makers of New England (AGM) and is underwritten by a grant from the Tower Foundation.

Located on the second floor of the Oak Bluffs Library, GRN-MV provides reference books and on-line access to two comprehensive databases: AGM's Grant Makers Directory, with about 400 New England foundations, and the Foundation Center's Online Directory, a national database of nearly 100,000 organizations. The center is supervised by Mathew Bose, assistant library director.

To make sure people get the most out of this resource, GRN-MV provides trainers free of charge to help them learn how to conduct searches and make applications.

The Donors Collaborative recruited 16 very qualified trainers to volunteer at the center and they were trained by AGM's Martha Moore. One of the trainers, Penny Hinkle, volunteered to be the Trainer Coordinator.

In March, GRN-MV opened as 44 people representing 40 organizations attended a grant writing and research workshop run by Martha Moore with a special hands-on session in the computer lab at the High School

"That was an exciting session," said Penny Hinkle. "You could hear cries of joy when people actually found potential funders."

The trainers have been busy. Trainer Anne Sylvester helped Cathy Verost of the **FARM** prepare and submit her first ever grant application. Now Cathy is preparing a second one on her own. "As The FARM Institute grows we're seeking new funding sources and GRN-MV makes that very easy," says Verost. "It's a tremendous asset for the Island."

For more information including hours of operation and to schedule a trainer go to [mvdonors.org](http://mvdonors.org).

## MARTHA'S VINEYARD DONORS COLLABORATIVE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Anne Sylvester (R) helps Cathy Verost of the FARM with a \$35,000 grant at GRN-MV.

## Get Involved and Give Back!

As the accompanying articles show, there's a lot of important work being done here by volunteers. Many island Boards are looking for members and with President Obama's call to service we hope people will step forward. Motives for volunteering include helping the cause, meeting new people, giving back and having fun.

If you would like to help a non-profit by serving on a committee or Board please contact our Executive Director (508-645-3690) and we'll find one that's a good fit. If you want to volunteer for fundraising, events or programs contact the organization's volunteer coordinator directly. If they don't have one, why not volunteer to be their volunteer coordinator? Here are some useful volunteer tips:

- 1. Pursue what you love, not what you think you "ought" to do.** A good volunteer believes in the cause or organization for which he/she volunteers, but the best volunteers are fueled by a passion. Go to [mvdonors.org](http://mvdonors.org) for a Directory of non-profits.
- 2. Attend meetings before making a commitment.** Boards have personalities. Understand the organization's leadership and its style of work. Be sure that you're comfortable with that style and the people who will be your colleagues.
- 3. Know that organizations need the time, treasure, and talent of their volunteers.** Be especially aware of the time commitments expected of you and of the financial support that some organizations desire from their board members. Match your personal talents with the needs of the organization.
- 4. Expect to have fun or at least to feel good about your efforts.** You're not getting paid, so be sure to enjoy the psychic rewards of volunteering. If they are missing, look elsewhere. There are plenty of others that need you.

These tips were provided by Elaine Pace, educator, author, writing coach, and volunteer for several island organizations.

## How Can We Help You?

Contact our Executive Director (508-645-3690) for more information about:

### Donation of Securities

Many Island non-profits don't have the capability to accept donations of securities. However, you can still make contributions of stock by making a donor directed gift through the Donors Collaborative. We'll sell the securities upon receipt and pass 100% of the proceeds on to the organization of your choice as a gift from you.

### Anonymity

Want to make an anonymous gift, or several of them? Make a donor directed gift to the Donors Collaborative and we'll pass it on to the organization(s) of your choice while maintaining your complete anonymity. We'll also collect thank you letters/notes from the organizations and pass them on to you.

### Donor Directory

Not sure who to contribute to or volunteer with? Our on line directory of non-profits has detailed listings of island charities by area of interest. Go to [mvdonors.org](http://mvdonors.org).