

PEOPLE YOU KNOW, CARE YOU *TRUST*



**LITTLE RIVERS
HEALTH CARE**

**ANNUAL
REPORT 2021**
Year ending December 31st, 2021

STRONG ROOTS FOR GROWING A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Little Rivers is in its 17th year of operation as a federally qualified health center (FQHC) and now in the midst of some significant transitions. With two long-term leaders now retiring, it seems fitting to take a moment to pause to look back on where we have been, and assess where we are headed.

This report brings together our history, current state, and ambitious growth plans to provide context for what you might be seeing as you drive by our 4 sites. In 2006, none of us could have predicted where we would be today. But one thing has not changed, and that is the steadfast dedication of our employees and community partners.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. ~ Margaret Mead

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Wells River clinic circa 2006



East Corinth, formerly known as Valley Health Center

Our mission is to provide respectful, comprehensive primary care for all residents in our region, regardless of their ability to pay. We offer quality health care services to everyone. In the spirit of community, we make efforts to reach out and welcome those who need health services, but may have insufficient means to access them. We commit ourselves to continually reduce the burden of illness, injury, and disability, and to improve the health and quality of life of those for whom we care.

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP A TIME OF TRANSFORMATION

Dear Community,

We are in a time of transformation. Transformation is an act, process, or instance of changing. We must find our way in these new times of an enduring public health emergency, of advances and threats of technology, and of social change.

We continue with persistent efforts on the part of healthcare staff at Little Rivers to provide Covid 19 vaccinations, screenings and testing, and treatments. We continue with public response efforts and outreach through our clinics, schools, summer camps, farms, and businesses. This sustained and collective effort continues to keep our communities safe and to support our local economy.

In addition to our response to pandemic-based needs within the communities we serve, we have increased our scope of services and the size of our team. We now must grow our facilities to accommodate this growth and to soon provide much-needed oral health care services. We are thankful to have a broadly representative and supportive rank of staff and community volunteers on our Capital Campaign Committee, and through the leadership and support of our board of directors, we will be able to expand and update our facilities.

We are honored to receive an overwhelming level of support from the Rowe family through their generosity and recent development of the Whitney-Rowe Fund, we are thankful for significant capital grant support from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, two Congressionally Directed Spending Awards on behalf of the Office of Senator Sanders, and the Northern Border Regional Commission. All this support is allowing us to expand our facilities and to provide accessible dental care very soon.

As we journey through this time of transition, we recognize the dedication of every team member. Leadership often first credited for success. We recognize the collective dedication of our front office staff, our nursing staff, and our billing and finance staff as the most significant force in achieving our mission. You all create the setting for each other, our providers, our leadership team, and our board of directors to collectively serve our mission.

Thank you all.

MEG BURMEISTER
Chair, Board of Directors

SIMONE LESSAC-CHENEN, MD
Chief Medical Officer

ANDREW BARTER
Chief Executive Officer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2022

Little Rivers Health Care is designated as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). FQHCs are required to have a community board of directors that represents the community and governs the affairs of the organization. At least 51% of the board members must be patients of the health center. Little Rivers has been extremely fortunate to have always had active, engaged board members who generously volunteer their time and expertise. Without them, Little Rivers would not be here.

Carole Freeman, Corinth (2003) was the assistant superintendent for curriculum at Washington Central Supervisory Union prior to her retirement. She is a founding member of the LRHC board and is the board Vice-Chair.

Margaret Burmeister, Topsham (2009) is the executive director of Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging. She previously was the director of case management for the Central Vermont Council on Aging. Meg is the board Secretary.

Scott Labun, Newbury (2012) is an independent financial advisor. He serves as a guardian ad litem and mediator for family court, is the board Treasurer and serves on the finance committee of the Little Rivers board of directors.

William Campbell, Littleton, NH (2014) is a mental health clinician at Center for New Beginnings and iHope Network, as well as a psychology professor at River Valley Community College in New Hampshire. His past experience includes four years as project manager of a Federally Qualified Health Center in New York State. Bill is the chairperson of the LRHC board.

Pam Smith, Groton (2017) is a longtime patient of Little Rivers who recently retired from the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging. She brings expertise in business, education, human resources, social services and elder care to her work on the board. Prior to coming to Little Rivers, she served on the Blue Mountain Union Board of Directors for 3 years.

Matt Knisley, Groton (2018) is a 16-year veteran police officer with a Master's Degree in Mediation and Applied Conflict Studies. He is a School Resource Officer and Crimes Against Children investigator and has extensive experience working with social services and dealing with the opioid epidemic in Vermont.

Kelsey Root-Winchester, Wells River (2020) is a health coach and yoga teacher. She owns Rising Spirit Yoga and co-owns the Wells River Wellness Hall. She also sits on the Blue Mountain Union school board and is Chairperson of the Wells River Action Program (WRAP).

Jill Skochdopole, Ryegate (2021) is a small animal veterinarian who founded Ryegate Small Animal Hospital in 1993. She is married to a farmer in the dairy industry and is the mother of 2 grown kids. She and her husband enjoy producing most of their own food - from their gardens and the animals they raise. Free time is mainly spent outdoors, though reading and cooking are her favorite indoor activities.

Darren Sherburne, Newbury (2021) Born and raised in Newbury, VT, Darren Sherburne has traveled throughout New England working in the Hospitality sector before returning back to his native area to pursue a career in Real Estate. Working for Four Seasons Sotheby's International Realty, Darren is interested in bettering his community and spreading the good word about the Upper Valley and the quality of life it allows.

Victoria Dickenson, Woodsville (2022) is the Fraud Investigations Officer at Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank. She has 16 years of banking experience, during which she's held various positions. Tori currently serves on Little Rivers' Finance Committee.

PRIMARY CARE MEDICAL PROVIDERS



MAUREEN BOARDMAN
FNP, MSN, APRN
Family Medicine,
Pre/Postnatal Care



KEVIN CONNOLLY
MD
Internal Medicine,
Infectious Disease



FAY HOMAN
MD
Family Medicine,
Pre/Postnatal Care



SIMONE LESSAC-CHENEN
MD, MPH
Family Medicine w/
Obstetrics, CMO



EMILY OLESON
MD
Family Medicine w/
Obstetrics



AYLA PRIESTLEY
FNP, MSN, APRN
Family Medicine



MARLENE BRISTOL
FNP, MSN, APRN
Family Medicine



STEPHEN GENEREAUX
MD
Family Medicine w/
Obstetrics



GRACE KOZIK
PMHNP, MSN, APRN
Psychiatry



RACHEL MORSE
FNP
Family Medicine



ALEX PERREAULT
FNP, MSN, APRN
Family Medicine



JESSIE REYNOLDS
MD, DIMPH
Family Medicine,
Pre/Postnatal Care



CAREY BRODZINSKI
FNP-C, MSN, APRN
Psychiatry,
Family Medicine



KATE GOYETTE
FNP, MSN
Family Medicine



CRYSTAL LEBEOUF
MD
Family Medicine,
Pre/Postnatal Care



ALLY NOBLE
FNP, RN-MSN
Family & Pediatric Medicine



PATRICIA PRATT
MD
Internal Medicine

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS



STACY BAKER
MS
Behavioral Health
Counselor



AMANDA REGIS
LICSW, LADC
Clinical Social Work



SARAH STORJOHANN
MA, CMHC
Behavioral Health
Counselor



TRACY THOMPSON
LICSW, LADC
Clinical Social Work,
Director of Behavioral
Health



MICHAEL BRANDLI
MS, CMHC, AAP
Assistant Director
of Behavioral Health



MARK RIZZACASA
MSW
Behavioral Health
Counselor



AJ SULLIVAN
LICSW
Behavioral Health
Counselor



TIFFANY WHITE
LICSW, LADC
Clinical Social Work,
MAT Coordinator



CAROLYN D'AQUILA
LICSW
Behavioral Health
Counselor



JAZMIN SMITH
MSW
Behavioral Health
Counselor



KIM THERRIEN
LICSW
Behavioral Health
Counselor

SERVICES

Services available to the community have evolved from traditional office-based medical services to now include.

- Comprehensive medical care including; pediatrics, family medicine, obstetrics, internal medicine
- Psychiatric care
- Care coordination/wrap-around services/insurance eligibility services
- Behavioral health, including services in all 6 OESU schools
- Medication Assisted Treatment for substance use
- Substance use prevention programming
- Farm worker outreach to 7-9 farms twice a year
- *Healthy At Home*: Chronic care management and remote patient monitoring
- Pain management
- Oral health care services via referrals, and twice a year through the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile at schools
- Food Pharmacy program
- Public health programming in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health
- Preventive and wellness care: Acuwellnes, Reiki, and Tai Chi
- Nutrition and dietetic services



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

IMPROVING PATIENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Patient care and experience, along with a strong employee support system, is the cornerstone to what makes LRHC a flourishing Patient Centered Medical Home.

LRHC is continuously evaluating the quality of patient experience and health outcomes through interdisciplinary teamwork.

Our staff are who make quality improvement possible through their endurance and dedication to service. Before we can meet the needs of our patients, we must support our staff. These past few years have seen a wildfire of medical professional burnout across the nation, but LRHC has grown substantially. As a small Federally Qualified Health Center we cannot always compete monetarily with large hospitals, but our clinic culture and team-based approach make our working environment stand out above the rest. We bring people in and encourage their personal growth. We see individual's strengths, not a human machine.

We are not the only ones who know our staff is awesome. Two of our nurses, Michele Fagnant and Michelle Hollis, were recognized by Bi-State's VT Outstanding Clinician Award for their exemplary skills and services that made a significant impact on the health of underserved patients and the community they serve. For another year, LRHC received Community Health Center Quality Recognition (CHQR) Badges for Advancing Health Information Technology for Quality, Addressing Social Risk Factors, and as a Patient Centered Medical Home.



Michele Fagnant



Michelle Hollis

Community Health Center Quality Recognition (CHQR) Badges



WE KNOW NOW, WHAT TO DO.

We are in a time of transition, and the legacy leadership of two founding woman leaders will continually serve Little Rivers as we address societal and organizational challenges.

“We, LRHC’s Board and Staff, are committed to developing and sustaining a health care system that is:

- Responsive to the needs of the residents we serve
- Comprehensive in scope, including primary care, outreach services, case management, mental health and oral health care
- Accessible to our community residents without regard to ability to pay”

Carole Freeman stated this commitment in her leadership role as the President of our Board of Directors in our first, 2005-2006 Annual Report. Carole has guided Little Rivers through endless decisions and challenges. Her contributions are foundational to our ability to serve the commitments she identified in her first report.

Subsequently in our 2006-2007 Annual Report, Gail Auclair, Chief Executive Officer, cited the following quote in her “Annual Perspective” letter from leadership:

“To have a firm persuasion in our work---to feel that what we do is right for ourselves and good for the world at the exact same time---is one of the great triumphs of human existence.” -William Blake

Gail taught us how to turn towards others with empathy and compassion. The leadership of Carole and Gail has taught us to be kind, to listen, to reflect, and to communicate with clarity. They have fostered an affiliative style of leadership in which we have learned to value people and their feelings.

Through the tenures of Gail and Carole, Little Rivers has remained responsive to the needs of the residents we serve. In addition to growing and sustaining much needed primary care, outreach services, and case management, we now have a robust behavioral health and psychiatric provider team. We also have the funding, blueprints, and property to construct a dental clinic. To ensure the launch and operation of the dental clinic, we have the physical plant and professional liaisons to launch a small dental clinic in Newbury which will also serve as a unique, rural training site for dental professionals. These successes are being achieved from the resonating leadership of Carole and Gail.

Although we have many successes to celebrate, we are facing tremendous challenges from the pandemic and from our rapid growth to serve the needs of our communities. We have significant financial and cultural challenges, and we will be successful in addressing these challenges by following the pathways shown to us by Carole and Gail. We are forever thankful.

We know now, what to do.

Thank you, Carole and Gail.

LRHC HISTORY

LRHC was founded in 2003 by a team of committed citizens and health care leaders in separate primary care practices in order to continue to offer medical services to our rural communities.

- Wells River Clinic - a private practice started by Dr. Harry Rowe in the 1950s.
- Bradford Health Services – a primary care practice owned by Cottage Hospital
- Valley Health Center in East Corinth – a Rural Health Clinic kept in operation by a volunteer community board after being spun off by Central Vermont Medical Center

After successfully achieving designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), they began operating as a single entity, Little Rivers Health Care, in June of 2006.

This consolidation and the federal grant funding allowed the 3 sites to continue offering access to needed health care services, and allowed LRHC to provide care to all residence regardless of their ability to pay.

In retrospect, this was indeed a bold move, but it has paid off for all involved. 16 years later, LRHC has:

- Tripled in size with regard to services and number of employees
- Evolved from owning virtually no assets to now owning 4 clinics plus a building which will soon be converted to a dental clinic
- Brought ~\$30 million in federal dollars into the community and has improved and expanded the original 3 clinics.

Original Providers



Partial representation of the original LRHC staff as seen from left to right, top to bottom: Stephen Genereaux, MD; Kevin Connolly, MD; Marlene Bristol, ARNP; Maureen Boardman, ARNP; Melanie Lawrence, MD; Fay Homan, MD; John Erb, MD

DENTAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Little Rivers has bold plans to provide dental services in 2 locations soon—Wells River and Newbury, and offer training opportunities for dental professionals.

The need for more access to dental services is widespread across Vermont, but it is especially dire in our east central Vermont service area where there are fewer than half the number of dentists per number of residents than the state average, according to the Vermont Department of Health 2019 Census of Dentists Statistical Report. Because of this, LRHC decided to design a 6-operator dental clinic in downtown Wells River in the former Jiffy Mart building.

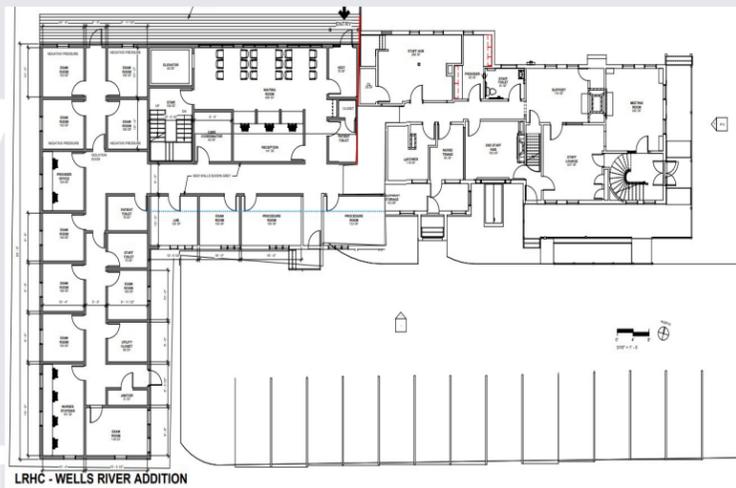


Wells River dental clinic sketch

Thanks to the generous support from the community, state, and Senator Bernie Sanders, this long-held goal will now become a reality. The property purchased for the Wells River dental clinic needed extensive environmental cleanup due to soil contamination from its prior uses; this was made possible thanks to the Village of Wells River, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation, VT Agency of Natural Resources, VT Department of Economic Development, and Stone Environmental.

We also received a \$1.334 million in Congressionally Directed Spending Award from Senator Sanders for the construction of the clinic.

Further support for launching dental services has also come from 2 very generous retiring dentists in our region. Dr. Ralph Faluotico, a dentist from Bath, NH, donated his office equipment and supplies to Little Rivers when he retired in 2020. Dr. Paul Rigali, an orthodontist from Woodstock, VT, also donated his office equipment as well as furniture upon his recent retirement. Many thanks to you both for this generosity!

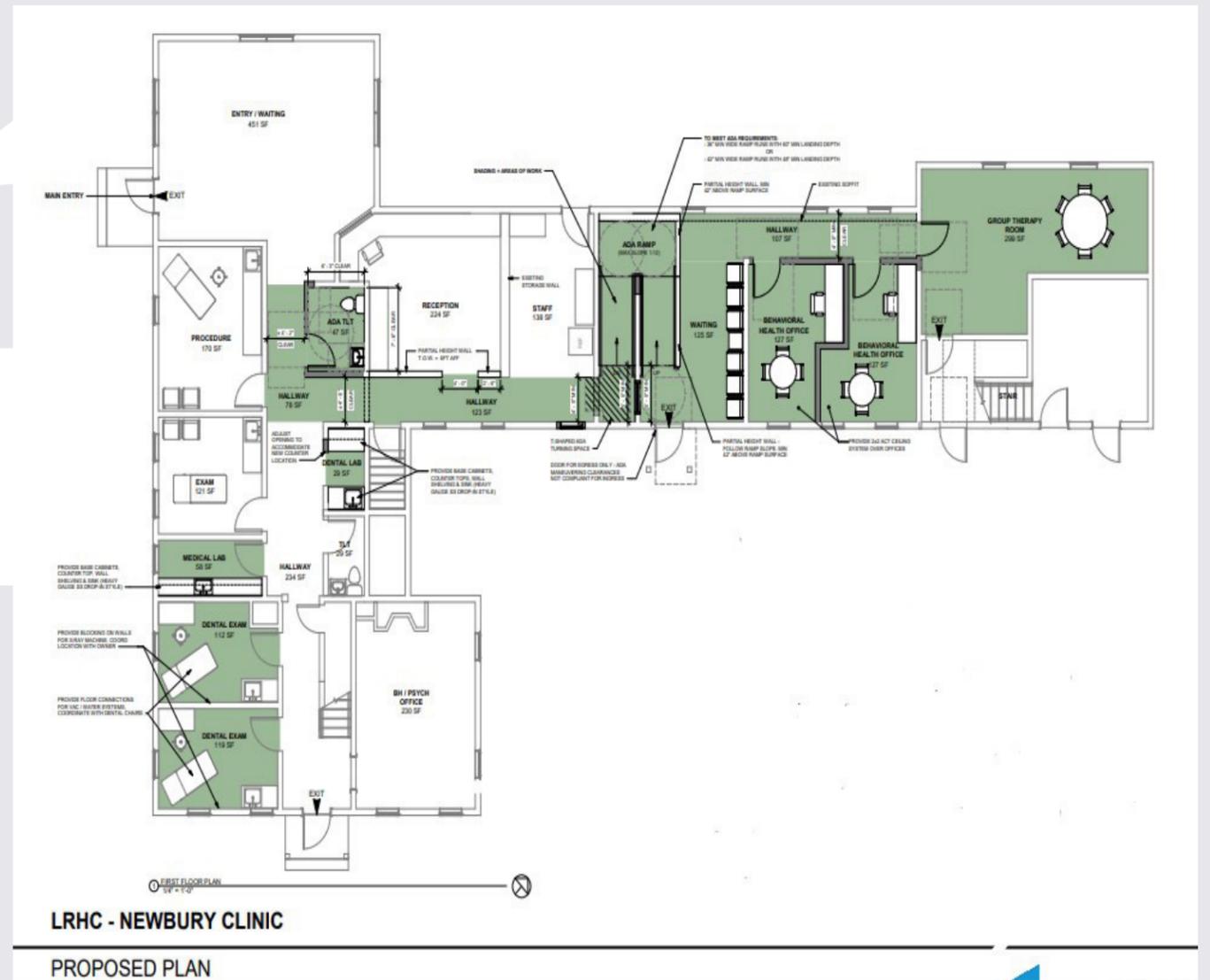


Wells River dental clinic floor plan

NEWBURY CLINIC RENOVATION

The most recent Community Health Needs Assessment that LRHC conducted indicated that access to mental and behavioral health, and oral health services continues to be difficult for many residents in our area. The purchase of the former Newbury Health Clinic from Dr. Melanie Lawrence in 2021 is enabling us to create more space for services in general, and behavioral health, mental health, and oral health services especially. Several behavioral health and mental health providers are already seeing patients there, and we now plan to add 2 dental operatories as well to serve as training sites for dental professionals.

LRHC has been extremely fortunate to attract excellent behavioral health clinicians and psychiatric nurse practitioners, and we have a good start at identifying dental staff. Both River Bend Career and Technical Center and Vermont Technical College have agreed to partner with us to establish as a training site for dental assistant and dental hygiene students, and we plan to work with area dental residency programs to provide clinical training for dental students.



LRHC - NEWBURY CLINIC

PROPOSED PLAN

BRADFORD CLINIC EXPANSION PROJECT

In October of 2020, LRHC was the grateful recipient of a \$1 million HRSA capital grant to support continued access to primary care services in Bradford. We were fortunate to find a highly qualified nurse practitioner immediately after expanding and renovating the first floor of the Bradford clinic when that was completed in 2018, but demand for services has continued to grow. This grant will provide additional space for medical and behavioral health services, as well as a new isolation wing to safely accommodate patients during a disaster or an emergency.

We eagerly look forward to the completion of this project in October.



Bradford clinic pre-renovation



Bradford clinic post-renovation

WELLS RIVER CLINIC RENOVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT



Wells River Clinic today, awaiting renovation and expansion

Our most ambitious capital project yet is being planned!

The Little Rivers Wells River Clinic dates to the 1950's when Dr. Harry Rowe first opened up shop. Gone are the days (sadly) of being able to accept chickens and produce in exchange for medical services, and the building itself is in dire need of expansion and renovation to keep up with the increased demand for services in the community. But we want to retain the country doctor charm and honor Dr. Rowe's community-minded legacy.

To fully address the current needs and those anticipated into the future, a design was developed with input from staff and assistance from consultants, and fund raising to make this a reality has begun. We are more than halfway toward our goal of raising \$4 million to complete the project, thanks to some large federal grants and donations.

Although the purpose of the expansion is to enable response to modern-day needs, we are working with a consultant and the state historic preservation office to preserve the unique architectural features of the building and barn, and stay in line with the Wells River Village's historic district.

Much more information to come!

2021 DONORS

Thank you to our community for supporting us through these unprecedented times. Donations came in many forms; financial, equipment, food, masks, and other in-kind contributions. We could not have met this challenge without you all!

Individuals:

Anonymous	Hamilton & Thelma Frost	Bill & Sue Parmenter
Michael & Marjorie Audet	Cadence Sugar Genereaux	Claude Phipps & Connie Philleo
Grace Bagley	Ron & Mary Ann Gilman	Harvey & Eleanor Powers
Wayne Berry	Diane Goins	Christopher Preston
Walter Bone	Luise Graf	Carey Russ & Jamie Brooks
Chris Brady & Elissa Close	Sarah O. Green	Cyrus Severance
Sarah & Charlie Calley	Allan & Claire Gurney	Peter & Jackie Sinclair
Robert Chapla & Lenice Cicchini	Joyce Homan	Brent & Pamela Smith
David & Dorothy Cheever	Hope Hutchinson	Matthew Smith
Raymond & Mary Chin	Margaret Kidder	Albert Sortino
Rebecca Cole	Michael Kolakowski	Altoon Sultan
Fran & Rosemary Collins	Scott & Jane Labun	Richard and Virginia Swenson
Michael & Carey Curtis	Sydney Lea & Robin Barone	Laura Waterman
Jeremy & Sandra Dickson	Judith Lerner	William & Joy Weale
William Eastman	Connie Linnell	Lester Williams
Ralph Faluotico, DDS	James Masland	Lucille P. Wolf
Laura Fraser	Patricia & Jeffrey McKelvey	
	Jim Morel	

Businesses and Organizations: The Beverly Community Impact Fund, Bradford Optical, Green Reaper of Vermont, Hannaford Community Bag's, St Martin's Episcopal Church, Valley Health Center Auxiliary, Wells River Savings Bank, Woodsville Guarantee Savings Bank.

LRHC Board of Directors

Town Appropriations: Bradford, Corinth, Fairlee, Groton, Ryegate, Topsham



E. Corinth Valley Health



E. Corinth - New floors throughout the clinic

Bradford Office

437 S Main St, Bradford,
VT 05033
802-222-9317

East Corinth Office

720 Village Rd, East Corinth,
VT 05040
802-439-5321

Newbury Office

4628 Main Street Newbury,
VT 05051
802-866-3000

Wells River Office

65 S Main St, Wells River,
VT 05081
802-757-2325