

Charlotte Food Shelf Inc.

Mission

The Charlotte Food Shelf Inc. (CFS) is a nonprofit striving to provide nutritious food to residents of Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh facing food insecurity.

Since 1990, there has been some form of food assistance offered by Charlotte citizens concerned about the food insecurity of their neighbors. Initially, non-perishable food was picked up at the Vermont Foodbank warehouse in a van and transported back to the Congregational Church parking lot where it was distributed. By 1994, storage and distribution had moved to donated space in the basement of the Charlotte Congregational Church vestry.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and the Charlotte Congregational Church have supported CFS from its inception by donating space for drop off and distribution as well as organizing food drives, website support, monetary donations, and assistance with funding and coordination of special projects.

In addition, the Charlotte community has always been, and continues to be, generous to CFS. CFS could not operate without that support, and grants from organization such as SCHIP, the Vermont Foodbank, and donations from businesses.

CFS has always operated independently. In 1996, after the collapse of the Vermont Foodbank warehouse, a new warehouse was built with federal funds. A requirement was that it serve only federally licensed nonprofits, but CFS was not a nonprofit at the time. With the support of the pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, CFS was able to operate under the umbrella of the Diocese of the Burlington Catholic Church until 2019. In 2019, CFS became an independent nonprofit.

Current Status and Programs

CFS continues to be an all-volunteer organization. We have no paid employees, and minimal administrative and overhead expenses due to the generosity of many members of our community with their time and resources.

Currently we have over forty volunteers who handle such tasks as food procurement, purchasing, distribution, emergency requests, publicity, thank you notes, accounting, and collaboration with CCS; and programs such as special holiday distributions, fall backpack/school supplies, winter clothing for children, the CCS shoe-in program, the spring kid's clothing drive (in collaboration with the Charlotte Grange), the summer lunch program, our assistance program, and anything else deemed necessary.

The biggest change for CFS over the past few years has been the expansion of our assistance program. Individuals may apply for help with heat or utility bills, rent, appliance repair, and car repair. Assistance is dependent on funds being available after providing food to those in need, which is our highest priority. Our assistance program also provides children's fall and winter clothing, backpacks, and appropriate sneakers for gym classes at CCS.

CFS has focused on outreach to better meet needs in the communities of Charlotte and North Ferrisburgh. From 2023 to 2024, there was a 40% increase in the number served. This prompted CFS to increase our number of distributions (3/24), decrease wait times, and provide better access to the building. As a result, we have had to purchase much more food and supplies and recruit more volunteers.

Currently CFS is still housed at the Charlotte Congregational Church. CCC has always been extremely generous and supportive. In the fall of 2024, the Church reorganized its space adjacent to CFS in order to allow the CFS to expand.

Goals

• Improve Space

There has never been a definitive connection or collaboration with the town of Charlotte regarding this very important organization. The CFS Board recently spent considerable time reaching out to the community at large and searching for a new space. This included formal communication with the selectboard, town planner and zoning administrator. To date, an affordable and more suitable space has not been found.

CFS received a Capacity Grant from the Vermont Foodbank in June of 2024 for general upgrades and reorganization of our current space. With these funds, CFS was able to purchase a new commercial refrigerator in November 2024. In the spring of 2025, new shelving and new storage bins were purchased with the grant money. The CFS space was renovated thanks to the generosity of Peter and Carrie Fenn (Fenn Construction) who donated their time and expertise to do this project for us. Many volunteers assisted as well. In the summer of 2025, a large freezer was purchased with additional grant money from the Vermont Foodbank. Peter Carreiro of Rise 'n Shine has donated space to house the freezer. Now CFS is able to purchase and store additional meat and other frozen food.

• Fundraising

CFS added online giving to our website in the fall of 2023 to make giving to CFS easier.

Our board has identified the need for developing databases and increasing community outreach to raise funds.

Our board set a goal of increasing revenues by \$10,000 this fiscal year (2024-2025) to meet the increased expenses of pursuing our mission. In the fall of 2024, we published announcements in The Charlotte News and sent a town wide fundraising flyer. CFS will have an annual appeal going forward.

Peggy Mahoney Sharpe, President
Charlotte Food Shelf Inc.

Updated 10/25