

### News Written for the People by the People

The Rutland Herald – Environment Page, Rutland

Local newspapers are responding to changes in media, technology and public interest in a variety of ways. Since 2008, Vermont's Rutland Herald and Barre Times Argus have published an Environment Page each Sunday morning with feature articles on topics like commuting by bike, celebrating a green Christmas, weatherizing older homes, learning outdoors, and hundreds of others. Today the printed versions of these sister papers enjoy a statewide readership of 20,000 people on Sundays.

Most of the articles on the Environment Page are written not by journalists but by local experts and community leaders. The six regular contributors to the Weekly Planet portion of the page include a climate scientist, a local farmer, a green builder, an energy efficiency specialist, and the executive directors of the Vermont Natural Resources Council and Renewable Energy Vermont. Meanwhile, feature article authors range from local business owners to college professors and students, and from non-profit administrators to research scientists. Elizabeth Gibson edits the Environment Page, and she explains that while the paper assigns journalists to write some of these articles, many of them fall under the category of "community-based journalism," which is a growing trend. She admits that she often "prefers to work with people who are writing about things firsthand" as they really are the experts in their fields.

Not only does the Rutland Herald believe that it is valuable to have community members contribute to the content of the paper, it also wants to be used as an information resource long after it is read over Sunday breakfast. To this end, the paper is beginning to archive past Environment Pages to make them available on a searchable website for teachers and students alike. In doing so, the paper will insure that the contributions of community members will be more than just today's news.

**Environment**  
Local • State • National  
The Rutland Herald

**The Rearing of red foxes**  
February is an ideal time to notice fox dens

**By JOHN WILLIAMS**  
The first week or so, and the first few days, are the most important. The foxes are born, and they are in the den. The mother fox is with them, and she is nursing them. The father fox is nearby, and he is protecting the den. The foxes are growing up, and they are learning to hunt. The mother fox is teaching them, and the father fox is helping them. The foxes are becoming adults, and they are ready to leave the den. The mother fox is saying goodbye to them, and the father fox is saying hello to them. The foxes are now on their own, and they are living their lives. The mother fox is proud of them, and the father fox is proud of them. The foxes are the future of the forest, and they are the future of the world.

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Image provided by Rutland Herald

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### An Electric Utility's Energy Saving Initiatives

Central Vermont Public Service – Employee Farm Share Program, Rutland

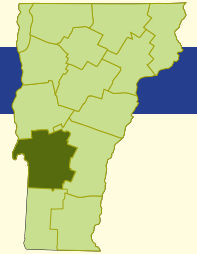
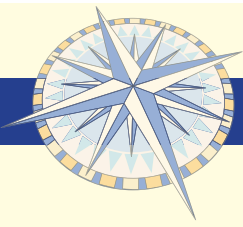
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is becoming a popular way to purchase local food. In a CSA, the consumer buys a share in a farm and pays money up front to help cover the season's start-up costs. In exchange, the consumer receives fresh produce and farm products each week during the course of the season. At Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS), Vermont's largest electric utility company, employees participating in the Farm Share Program get their weekly farm share delivered right to the office. Worksite delivery saves employees both fuel and time as they no longer need to shop for fresh produce each week.

The project, a partnership with area farmers and the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link, began in 2010 with a pilot program of 40 CVPS employees. Karen Massaro from CVPS says that most of the participants enjoy the CSA very much, and in particular, "People have enjoyed being introduced to items that they normally would bypass at the grocery store, like kale or Swiss chard." She also said



Image provided by CVPS

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that the farmers share recipes with the participants so they can experiment with different items. Casual conversations in the office now are often about garlic scapes and collard greens rather than sports scores.

And the Farm Share Program is just one of many CVPS initiatives that illustrate its commitment to the community and the environment. The company also has a Sustainability Committee that is responsible for countless energy, fuel and waste saving projects including the installation of software that allows computers to be turned off at night and powered on just for software or security updates, the presentation of eco-driving workshops, the gift of stainless steel travel mugs to any employee who signs a pledge not to use disposable cups at work, and the education of hundreds of elementary, high school and college students at their renewable energy education site. So when you receive your electric bill with its energy saving tips, know that the company is doing its part to save energy as well.

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### Local Farm Organization Cultivates Community

*Rutland Area Farm and Food Link – Grow the Longest Extra Row and New Farmer Initiative, East Poultney*

Farmers cultivate crops, and in many places, including Rutland County, farmers also cultivate community. The Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL) benefits the local community both through its Grow the Longest Extra Row program and through its New Farmer Initiative.

The Grow the Longest Extra Row program relies on an AmeriCorps Vista position that Green Mountain College generously shares with RAFFL. This AmeriCorps member works directly with local farmers’ markets, collecting food left unsold at the end of the day. In addition, the AmeriCorps member encourages local gardeners to donate extra crops and matches volunteers with local farms to glean unharvested crops that normally would be plowed under. According to Tara Kelly, executive director of RAFFL, the Grow the Longest Extra Row project collected 10,000 and 15,000 pounds of produce in its first and second years respectively. These “extras” are then given to area food shelves and parent-child centers to help feed community members in need. The parent-child center goes a step further by using the food to teach children about food storage, good nutrition and a healthy diet.

RAFFL also aims to cultivate young farmers through its New Farmer Initiative. This project helps young farmers by offering on-farm workshops, connecting young farmers with mentors, and matching landowners who have usable farmland with farmers who need land for growing. RAFFL board president Greg Cox has been offering his land and expertise to young farmers since the late 1990’s. He says of apprentices on his farm, “Sometimes you see someone who you know, if given the opportunity, will be successful at farming.” He is aware of and thankful for the breaks that he has received, and he has more land than he can use, so he’s more than happy to share it. Plus he says, “If this local food thing is going to work, we need more farmers.”

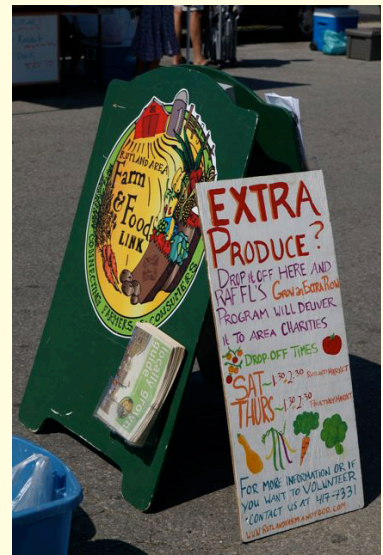


Image provided by RAFFL

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