



Theresa Snow



31, Morrisville

Program director of agricultural resources,
Vermont Foodbank

In the Vermont Foodbank's Wolcott distribution center, pallets are stacked high with bags of rice and canned vegetables, staples for food shelves and other agencies that receive food through the Foodbank, which they in turn provide to the needy. But in a large walk-in cooler, Theresa Snow shows off a newer development: tubs of fresh greens and crates of sun-yellow summer squash salvaged from local farms through the Foodbank's gleaning program, an outgrowth of a project she started in 2004.

The endeavor, originally named Salvation Farms, started small with Pete's Greens in Craftsbury where Snow, then a recent Sterling College graduate, had worked. "Pete had extra greens and we thought, 'Let's get this food to people who aren't buying it,'" Snow recalls. She deliv-

ered some to nearby senior and day care centers and called the Foodbank, which happily took the rest. The project quickly expanded to other farms that were eager to donate excess produce but did not have the staff to glean it or to train volunteers.

For three years, Salvation Farms served the Lamoille Valley under the financial sponsorship of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont. Snow involved dozens of gleaners from preschoolers to seniors, college students to at-risk youth because she believes the community should share in harvesting and learn how food is grown, lessons she treasures from her Morrisville childhood helping in her family's garden and on her grandparents' farm. "We wanted to reconnect people with what it means to provide for yourself," Snow explains.

By January 2008, the project was so successful and Snow stretched so thin, that

she and her advisory board decided to take the Foodbank up on its offer of a permanent home. Doug O'Brien, then Foodbank CEO, says Snow's efforts dovetailed perfectly with their goal to provide more fresh, locally grown food. "Theresa was doing the right thing at the right time," he says. "It was an incredible accomplishment how far she'd gotten with so few resources."

The Foodbank gleaning program now has field representatives in Brattleboro and Wolcott and rescued 400,000 pounds of produce last year from triple the number of farms as two years ago. Unfortunately, need for emergency food continues to grow in Vermont. The USDA reports that the number of Vermonters at greatest risk of hunger has increased significantly over the past decade. All the more reason not to leave any apple unpicked. "Food is for everybody and farmers want to feed everybody," Snow says. 🍎