



# Volunteer Report 2026



"Planting and harvesting sessions taught me more about the food I eat and how it is grown. It's **helped me connect even more deeply to my food and my community.**"

"The staff is so welcoming, I always feel safe attending as I know I will be able to contribute as best as I am able."

"Being part of making locally, humanely grown food accessible to others in my community is a fulfilling way to help right our unjust system."

## 2025 Volunteer Impact

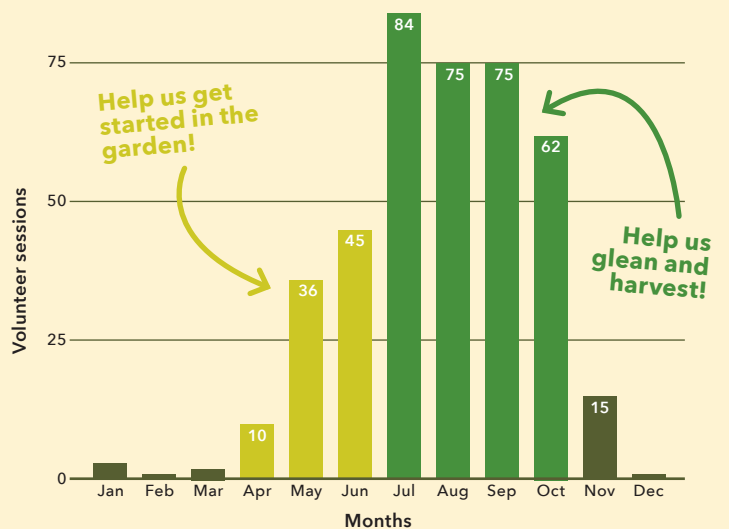
**794**  
total volunteers

**408**  
sessions, compared to 332 sessions in 2024, a 23% increase!

**4,793**  
volunteer hours

In total, community members harvested **77,920 lbs of food** in 2025.

2025 volunteer sessions by month





# Volunteering *at*

## Back in 2026!

Never volunteered with Willing Hands before? Join us for one of our monthly **Newcomers Welcome Garden Sessions!**

Willing Hands works to reduce waste and ensure everyone in our community has access to fresh nourishing food. Volunteers help us fulfill our mission by growing, harvesting, recovering, and sorting nutritious food, right here in the Upper Valley.

## Gardens

Join us for regularly scheduled 2-hour sessions, from spring through the fall harvest, at any of our four Upper Valley gardens.

### REGULAR GARDEN SESSIONS

- Tuesday and Saturday mornings and Thursday afternoons at our Sunny Fields plots at Cedar Circle Farm
- Tuesday evenings at our Home Garden in Norwich
- Wednesday afternoons at the Farmacy Garden at DHMC, 3-hour drop-in session
- Thursday mornings, June through August, at our River Road Garden in Norwich

### POP-UP SESSIONS

- Large planting events throughout the season
- Special garden-specific projects
- Crop harvests



**"The Willing Hands gardens are magical places that bring together people from across all different ages, abilities, and life experiences. Joining one of our five weekly sessions is a great way to create connection while sharing in the wonderfully dirty work of growing food for our communities."**

*—Ehrin Lingeman, Farm Manager*



In 2025, **593 garden volunteers** helped us prepare beds and then plant, water, weed, and harvest **24,554 lbs of crops!**

## Groups

Bring your group to volunteer in our Garden, Gleaning, Bits & Bobs, and Veggies for Vets programs.

### GROUP SESSIONS

- Contact us about setting up a volunteer session for your group by emailing [volunteer@willinghands.org](mailto:volunteer@willinghands.org)
- Big groups and those with young participants often fit best in our garden program, where we can accommodate groups of up to 20 and kids as young as six years old

**"Volunteering as a group is a fun and meaningful opportunity for team building, connecting with the community, and impacting local food insecurity."**

*—Christine Savage, Community Engagement Coordinator*

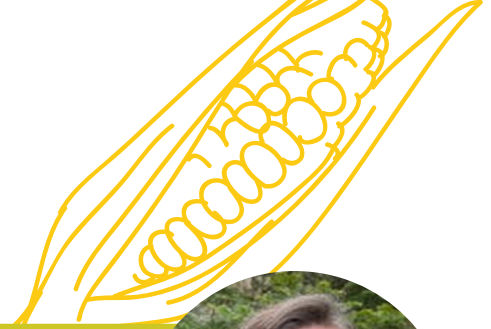


### NEW in 2025: Affinity Groups

Last year, we began hosting monthly volunteer sessions for individuals with common interests or identities. We're excited to continue this offering this year. If there is a group you'd love to see represented, let us know!

Willing Hands hosted **57 groups** from local businesses, schools, clubs, and more last year. **248 adults** and **78 youth** volunteered with a group!

# Willing Hands



## Gleans

Join a glean (generally 1.5 hours) and help us collect unharvested excess vegetables, berries, apples, and mixed produce directly from the fields.

### REGULAR GLEANING SESSIONS, JUNE-OCTOBER

- Monday mornings at Crossroad Farm
- Tuesday and Thursday mornings at Harlow Farm
- Wednesday mornings at Honey Field Farm
- Thursday mornings at Edgewater Farm
- Friday mornings at Cedar Circle Farm

### POP-UP SESSIONS

- Strawberries in June
- Blueberries in July
- Corn in August
- Apples and root veggies in September and October



"Gleaning helps us bring fresh, locally grown food to our communities so that **EVERYONE** has access to it. In addition to harvesting, you'll enjoy good company and conversation in the fields of beautiful farms. Come for one session or many—and you're always welcome to bring a friend!"

—Shara Buffington, Gleaning Coordinator



Last year, **217 Willing Hands gleaning volunteers** helped us conduct **146 gleaning sessions** at **28 partnering farms and orchards** throughout the region.

## Admin & Office

Help us with regular projects like data entry, photography, administrative projects, and indoor plant care, or join the push to get a mailing out the door or put on an event.

In 2025, **4 rockstar admin volunteers** helped out for a total of **156 hours!**

Email [info@willinghands.org](mailto:info@willinghands.org) if you're interested in becoming a regular administrative volunteer.

## Warehouse & Facility

Come help our dedicated staff ensure that the food we distribute to community members is of the highest quality.

### REGULAR SESSIONS

- Bits & Bobs: Join our staff in the warehouse to sort food
- Bin Care: Wash and organize produce transport bins
- Driving: Pick up small quantities of produce from local farms and other food donors
- Veggies for Vets: Pack CSA boxes for Veterans
- Landscaping: Help with grounds care tasks like lawn-mowing at our Norwich facility

"Folks who volunteer for the Bits & Bobs food sorting sessions really enjoy rescuing as much food as possible for their neighbors."

—Chris Castle,  
Logistics Coordinator

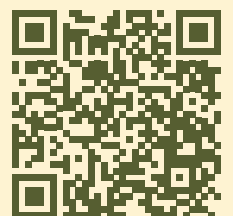


In 2026, our **Veggies for Vets food packing sessions** will return from July through October.

## Join us for a volunteer session!

Use our volunteer calendar at [willinghands.org](http://willinghands.org) or scan the QR code to sign up for regularly scheduled and impromptu pop-up sessions.

Scan to volunteer!





Willing Hands

Reducing  
food waste to  
*end hunger.*

198 Church Street  
Norwich, VT 05055  
[willinghands.org](http://willinghands.org)

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## Celebrating Milt & Carolyn Frye

### *Champions of Willing Hands' gleaning program*

Milton and Carolyn Frye have been a core part of the Willing Hands' gleaning program since they became volunteers in 2008. When the program started, it was occasionally just the two of them, Executive Director Heather Bagley, and long-time Willing Hands staff member Jim McCracken, out in the field. 18 years later, in 2025, the gleaning program hosted more than 200 volunteers, often working shoulder to shoulder with the Fries to harvest everything from apples to zucchini. The program has grown, but the work and the driving force are the same. Milt and Carolyn put it this way: "Gleaners feel they can make a difference by harvesting fresh, locally grown surplus produce for those who would otherwise not be able to afford it. We really enjoy working in the fields at local farms with like-minded gleaners. It's rewarding work on so many levels."

The Fries won't be glean leaders in 2026, as they've recently taken on a new project: being first-time grandparents! We are eternally grateful for their years of service building and sustaining this core part of Willing Hands' mission.



**Want to help  
continue this legacy  
of volunteering?**  
Stick this report on  
a corkboard in your  
community or at your  
place of work!