



# neighbor to neighbor

News from  
 Freeport  
 Community  
 Services

SPRING 2021

## Turning the page

"I love people and I love helping people," said Founding Mother Vaughndella Curtis about her long history with Freeport Community Services. "I didn't care how much money they made or what they had. It was the people. I got along with them and loved them."

The people of Freeport and Pownal have always been the heart of FCS. "Once we got together," Vaughndella said of those early days, "the town got behind us. The police, the ministers and churches, the selectmen, they all supported us." Food, rent, and furniture and clothing assistance were central in those early days. Other initiatives emerged, like camp scholarships and holiday help. Fundraisers and pie sales were organized by volunteers to provide the financial means to make these programs a reality.

"Volunteers really built the organization," Kim Hudak, FCS' Office Manager. "They were our rocks. They came early in the morning and stayed long into the evening." There have been so many influential volunteers over the decades. The Thrift Shop, for instance, was run by volunteers like Elaine Wyman, Gladys Curtis, Sally Amory, and Marjorie Perkins, who sorted items in the back room well into her 80s. "Volunteering at FCS gave folks a sense of belonging to community. They really took pride in what they did," said Kim. "And, they were always such a hoot!"



Marjorie Perkins, Sally Amory, and Anita Chomyn in 2011



Joan Plourde in the Pantry in 2021

FCS gently evolved over the years. When there was a need, the community came together to meet it. Then, seemingly overnight, everything changed. Vaughndella, who grew up during World War II, likened the early days of the pandemic to that tumultuous time. "It's affected everyone and every type of business," she sighed.

FCS' Sarah Lundin recalls a phone call she had last March. "All of a sudden we said, 'We can't open on Monday. How will we get food to people?' We just stopped what we were doing

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## Mission Statement

To enrich lives, connect neighbors and help those in need in Freeport and Pownal.

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## Dear FCS Friends,

Get ready because we are going to name drop all over this newsletter. There's no better way to bring your attention to all the wonderful organizations and individuals who collaborate with Freeport Community Services.

My first shout out goes to the immensely talented staff here at FCS. With creativity and positivity, Kim, Robin, Don, Sarah, Susan, Megan, Erin, Regina, Melissa, and Chris shepherded our organization through this past pandemic year. While our doors are still only partially open, we continue to provide essential services to our community and opportunities for connection and enrichment.

My next shout out goes to the businesses and organizations who have stepped up to help us meet our mission this past year. Along with the incredible generosity of our community, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Laughing Stock Farm, Wolfe's Neck Center, and Hannaford keep our food pantry well stocked. Twice a month, Chandra Thoits Abraham from Midcoast Federal Credit Union and Lily Montgomery from Bessie's Farm Stand cook up delicious and nourishing Free Friday Lunches. Our neighbors will be kept warm this winter and next due in no small part to the incredible efforts of Catrina Milliman and Tegan Milligan-Barber of State Farm who helped us plan and pull off a successful Freeze Out. Providing connection and enrichment is part of our mission and FCS was thrilled to be invited to collaborate on the Tri-town Equity and Inclusion Coalition's kick off to the 21 Day Anti-Racism Challenge. We were also so grateful to The Bradley Family Foundation, Casco Bay CAN, and RSU5 for partnering with us to bring the film LIKE to our schools and community.

My final shout out goes to all our volunteers past and present. While there are too many of you to name individually, we hope you know that you are the backbone of everything we do. Your work has made FCS what it is today. And, we invite you to be right there with us and we move towards a bright, new future.

With gratitude,



Liza Moore  
*Interim Executive Director*





## Growing together

When 2020 shut down summer events at Wolfe’s Neck Center, they didn’t just take their tomatoes and head home. They dug for a way to turn the loss into a something meaningful.

They redirected the time and food normally channeled into events like Farm-to-Table evenings towards local organizations including our Food Pantry. Through summer and fall, our community was fed on beautiful, farm fresh produce, meat, and eggs grown right here in Freeport. Wolfe’s Neck Center volunteers donated stunning bouquets from their own gardens that, in previous years, graced the farm event tables. These donations nourished our clients’ hearts and souls.

This year, Wolfe’s Neck Center will again partner with Freeport Community Services. And, again, their community is eager to pitch in. Each month, WNC offers meat boxes for purchase. Along with the boxes comes an opportunity to donate a pound of ground beef to FCS. Every pound donated is matched by WNC.

“Anytime you inspire people to be philanthropic and think about their community, it’s a good thing,” said Jeannie Mattison, WNC’s Director of Development and Community Engagement. WNC will gather their farm community to harvest and wash vegetables that will ultimately be donated to the Food Pantry. WNC plans to expand other offerings as well, such as eggs and vegetables donated throughout the season.

Expertise is another valuable resource WNC has to offer. Tom Prohl and Eliza Baker-Wacks, who run the WNC training program, will share their knowledge with our community gardeners. They plan to host a presentation, answer questions, and find out about specific challenges community gardeners are having. “Tom and Eliza are not just farmers, they are educators,” said Mattison. “They do this kind of thing all the time, but out at WNC’s veggie plot. It will be really cool for them to do this on site.”



The partnership between WNC and FCS is bountiful in so many ways and, just like a well-tended garden, it will continue to grow.



Michele Guillette checks customers out at the Thrift Shop

## volunteer update

### The future of FCS volunteering

Masked up and tucked behind plexiglass, Joanie Plourde welcomed shoppers back into our Food Pantry, chatting cheerfully as they picked out fresh dairy and produce. By the front door, Jane Mallett checked guests into the pantry, keeping a keen eye on occupancy limits. April also saw the return of volunteers inside the Thrift Shop. Susan O’Connell arranged displays and tidied up racks on a quiet Monday morning. The next day, Michele Guillette deftly rang up purchases with the iPad.

“I’m a big believer in matching volunteers to jobs that make the best use of their skills and interests,” said volunteer coordinator Susan Adams. “It makes the experience more valuable and more enjoyable. It’s exciting to be able to expand our volunteer opportunities at FCS. Expanding in such an intentional way makes that even better.”

Health and safety guidelines still restrict the use of physical space within the center. Even so, Adams is finding creative ways to bring our volunteers back, like exploring the potential for outdoor volunteer opportunities.

“Safety is still the utmost concern,” Adams says. “In order to fulfill our mission and meet the needs of our neighbors, we have to stay open. To stay open, we have to stay safe.”

FCS is thrilled to see long time volunteers returning. “I worked twelve years before they closed for the virus,” said Joanie Plourde, “and I was so happy to be back. I just love it, everything about it.”



# thrift shop update

## Thrift social



Thrift shopping was a social event long before social media. “Thrift shopping is as much about the relationships and the vibe as it is about the finds,” Thrift Shop manager Megan Hanson explains.

Last spring, the Thrift Shop leveraged its social savvy to continue those relationships and offer more finds online. “In the past, we featured niche, high-end items on online,” Hanson says. “We leaned on that to connect with customers and offer the option of curbside shopping.”

Online Thrifting has taken off. Our Facebook and Instagram followers love our curated collection of unique, timely and trendy items. And, when their friends see their finds, our community grows stronger.

## It’s all about community

It’s not just our online community growing stronger. “The FCS Thrift Shop is really mission driven,” explains the Thrift Shop’s Regina Kusche. “When we sell a comfy chair or cute pair of sandals, the profits fund programs like fuel assistance and summer camp scholarships.” The Thrift Shop’s online presence draws customers from Portland and from points north and west. “Expanding our customer base is like expanding our donor base,” says Kusche. “It decreases the pressure for fundraising on our local community.”

The Shop relies on our local community for donations of furniture, clothing, housewares, shoes, and all sorts of items. “It’s furniture that really sets us apart from other thrift shops,” says Hanson. “All these beautiful pieces get a second life, instead of winding up in a landfill.”

## Virtual success

How did FCS stay connected when we all had to stay apart? With a little ingenuity and a lot of zoom calls, FCS’ COVID-safe events showed us what community is all about.

## Spreading the love

It all started in the fall. Just as the leaves fell from the trees, bright red hearts sprang up around Freeport and Pownal. FCS’ Spread the Love Community Spirit Raiser was a way for neighbors to bring a little joy into each other’s lives.



It also raised money for food, fuel, and emergency assistance.

Hearts were ‘sold’ for a suggested \$5 donation from our Thrift Shop and downtown at Visit Freeport. Students from Freeport High School’s National Honor Society pitched in to sell hearts at pop-up shops, too.



## Learning to be an ally

Freeport Community Services has been a gathering place for our community to confront racial issues, including last summer’s March for Justice rally.

This January, we’d hoped to host the Kick Off to the Tri-Town Equity and Inclusion Coalition’s 21 Day Anti-Racism Challenge. When the Kick Off moved online, FCS took the lead on spreading the word. Over the course of the 21 Day Challenge, over 350 people explored systematic racism, implicit bias, and the difference between being color blind and color brave. TTE&I’s work continues with community discussions and a virtual book club on May 5th.

## Hidden gems

Freeport and Pownal are home to all sorts of hidden treasures. This spring, FCS launched a family-friendly, self-guided Treasure Hunt to introduce, or re-introduce, them to families.



Ten ‘gems’ were hidden in special spots like the Desert of Maine, Garden Spot Farm, and Simpson Woods Trail, a new Freeport Conservation Trust property. Families who found at least five gems delivered their maps to the FCS Treasure Box. In exchange, they were entered in a prize raffle and got a coupon for a free cone at Derosiers.

## Social media. What's not to LIKE?

FCS and RSU5 hosted a virtual screening of LIKE, a documentary on the impact of social media on youth and the effects of technology on the brain. The Bradley Family Foundation and Casco Bay CAN also contributed generously to make LIKE free to our community. LIKE gave viewers useful, concrete steps to take control of their relationship with their smartphones. In a lively question and answer session following the film, panelists Dr. Laura Blaisdell and Dr. Amy Buczkowski offered their personal and professional perspectives. Freeport Middle School's Phyllis Latham shared what she sees in schools and how the social media impacts teen substance use.



Over 240 households signed up for the free screening. It was also shown to students at Freeport Middle School, Durham Community School, and Freeport High School.

## Freeze Out during COVID?



Freeze Out is FCS' annual emergency heating assistance fundraiser. With folks home more and families facing lost work or lower wages due to quarantine, this year's need was greater.

FCS' average fuel allocation of \$300 covers one hundred gallons of heating oil, a tank of propane or kerosene, a cord of wood, or a

ton of pellets. Anyone who has lived through a Maine winter knows that only goes so far. We wanted to do more.

We set an ambitious goal of \$10,000. With the help of a GoFundMe campaign, dedicated volunteers, and a couple of inflatable dinosaur costumes, we smashed right through it.

Before the event, Dinosaurs Catrina Milliman and Tegan Milligan-Barber played "Freeze Tag" with local businesses and hosted a dinosaur themed Facebook 'telethon. For the day of Freeze Out, donation stations were set up outside of FCS. Snow turned to driving rain, but couldn't dampen our spirits. One by one, cars drove up to fill our jars with dollars and checks. Brickyard Hollow donated pizza and Zestea warmed us up with donations of hot tea.

"As I stood on the street waving my red mitten, I was moved by what was happening," FCS Board member and volunteer Pat Palmer shared. "One woman drove up and gave \$50. She said that FCS had helped her several times over the years and that it was the least she could do. Cars with out of state license plates stopped. FCS reached out and the community generously responded, recognizing a need and stepping forward to help their neighbors."

# programming update

## FCS is here to help

The future is looking brighter, but many families are still digging out from the past year. Before you take out a loan or stretch your finances to the breaking point, let FCS help.

Maybe your kid needs soccer cleats or you popped a tire. Some needs don't fit neatly into traditional programs. We'll still try to help offset those expenses. All you have to do is reach out. We will help if we can, without judgement. We are in this together.

## More ways to access the Pantry

Our Food Pantry is open to shoppers again! Pick out fresh produce, bread, deli products, and household essentials like diapers or cleaning supplies. Prefer drive-up? Visit us on Wednesday. Need a little extra to make it through a week? Return for Bonus Time.

**Shopping:** Mon 11-3, Tues 9:30-11:30

**Drive-up:** Wed 11-1 *Bonus time:* Wed 1-1:30

Can't make it to the Pantry? Contact Sarah about home delivery.

## All kids deserve a safe, happy summer

Summer camp is expensive, but it isn't a luxury. "I can get most of the cost of camp, I just can't quite get it all. FCS gets me there," says Sarah Jacobs, Freeport mom. "When I drop my son at camp, I watch his face just light up. He comes home more confident. He's hoping to be a counselor there next year."



Caden Jacobs hopes to become a camp counselor next summer

Families can apply for scholarships for overnight and day camps, enrichment activities and teen opportunities.

Visit [fcsmaine.org](http://fcsmaine.org) and click on Youth Programs for more information. Contact: Sarah Lundin, 865-3985 x205 or [slundin@fcsmaine.org](mailto:slundin@fcsmaine.org)

# meet our tenants

The Freeport Community Center is home to other non-profit organizations doing good for our community and for our world.

## RSU5 Community Programs, The Port Teen Center



The PORT is home to after school

and summer programming for teens. The adjacent Learning Lab offers adult education in the form of language classes for new Mainers and high school equivalency courses. "The PORT been home to a lot of success stories," Community Programs' Peter Wagner says proudly. "FCS is the perfect location for our programs. We feel really welcome here."

## Katrina Van Dusen, Freeport Conservation Trust

This grass-roots land trust is dedicated to



sharing Freeport's special natural places. FCT has conserved over 1,700 acres of open space and 20 miles of trails. "It's wonderful to have our office in the Center," says Van Dusen. "We have access to amenities like meeting space and I get a good read on what's going on around town just being here."

## Tom Duffus, The Conservation Fund



TCF is a national non-profit land conservation organization. With their partners, TCF has conserved

467,000 acres of open space in Maine and over 8 1/2 million acres nationally. "My experience in this building reflects how I feel about Freeport," says Duffus. "From the first moment, I could tell Freeport was a **community that cares about its people.**"

"Tenants" continued on pg. 7

# Making a name for themselves

How do you know something is built to last? You look at its foundation.

Freeport Community Services' foundation is built of strong stuff. Our last newsletter highlighted our founding director, Betsy Ruff. She helped FCS take shape and was devoted to its success throughout her life. Sadly, this winter we lost Betsy. Her passing made us pause and reflect on the impact of all our founding mothers. It gives us great joy to announce a scholarship in Betsy's honor, along with the naming of the Vaughndella Curtis Food Pantry and the Carol Southall Camp Scholarship Program.

## The Betsy Ruff Scholarship

Betsy believed in helping others and she believed in supporting her community. This scholarship is in memory of those twin passions and will support a Freeport High School student with a similar drive to help others.



## The Vaughndella Curtis Food Pantry



Vaughndella, too, was part of FCS from the beginning. She was a stalwart fixture in the Pantry, welcoming folks and keeping children happily distracted while their parents shopped.

"It was always a joy to have Vaughndella around and the success of the Pantry is truly her legacy," mused Sarah Lundin, FCS' Director of Programs. "This is opportunity to share her joy and her impact, and to celebrate all that she has given to this community."

## The Carol Southall Camp Scholarship Program

Carol's devotion to the camp scholarship program was born out of her experience as a school nurse. She knows how a summer of enrichment sets a child up for success in the coming year, helping them build strong friendships and have new adventures.



"Carol brings a uniquely grounded approach and wealth of experience when considering the needs of children," Lundin shared. "Singlehandedly, she has made it possible for hundreds of kids to attend the camp of their choice. She inspired FCS to keep the barrier for help as low as possible while inviting families to give back to through an act of service to their community."

# Stay in touch

Subscribe to get regular emails at [fcsmaine.org/get-updates](https://fcsmaine.org/get-updates).

## On our list but not getting our emails?

Add [clyons@fcsmaine.org](mailto:clyons@fcsmaine.org) to your email CONTACTS. Check your Spam or Junk folder. If FCS is in there, please mark it as Not Spam or Not Junk.

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and started packing bags so people could still have their basic needs met."

When the doors to the center temporarily closed, it felt as though FCS was closing a chapter. The old way of doing things wasn't going to work. Safer-at-home orders and occupancy limits meant FCS couldn't lean on their deeply committed band of volunteers. "That was a huge loss for us," said Sarah. "But we were determined to stay optimistic. Out of the uncertainty and out of necessity, we were surprised to find an opportunity to change for the better. COVID forced us to become more efficient and more effective."

One change that made an immediate impact was reorganizing the role of volunteers. "Prior to the pandemic, volunteers were asking for more training. They wanted their jobs to be more consistent, more focused. They were asking us for more clarity and purpose in their work," said Sarah. "As we figure out what jobs volunteers can do now, we are developing realistic and honest job descriptions and expectations. We are so excited to be growing our volunteer offerings again."

Intentional planning has led to better outcomes. "Being more efficient means we have more energy to devote to our programs," Sarah beamed. "We have the space and capacity to develop new programs. We're able to evaluate current programs and make them even better." A perfect example is the Vaccine Help that came out of the Age Friendly Freeport and Pownal Steering Committee. It was a top priority and FCS quickly set up to help residents get scheduled for vaccines and coordinated rides to the shots.

The role of events is being recast as the Center reopens as well. "Pausing in-person events presented an opportunity for a different kind of collaboration with our community," said Christine Lyons FCS' Communications Manager. "As we looked for new ways to fulfill our mission of enriching community life, we found partner organizations looking to do the same. They helped us turn good ideas into realities." Going forward, FCS plans to find more opportunities like the virtual film screening of LIKE and the self-guided, family Treasure Hunt.

At FCS, we are looking forward to turning the page on the pandemic. As our next chapter begins, we will remain true to our central theme of neighbors helping neighbors. "It's really a wonderful little community," Vaughndella said optimistically. "Whenever anything bad happens, everyone just pitches in." We couldn't agree more.

"Tenants" continued from pg. 6

### Jennifer Melville, The Open Space Institute

OSI is dedicated to conserving land that supports what people need and love - clean water, a safe climate, healthy communities, parks and open spaces, and healthy animal and plant habitat. "Having an office at FCC keeps me grounded in community. I can take a break from work to volunteer for the Backpack Program, browse the Thrift Shop, or check in with the wonderful FCS staff."



### Freeport Elders Association

The Elders offers space congregate, communicate, share and socialize in a style and atmosphere that appreciates our uniqueness, our value & wisdom. The Elders' Carol Piecuch says, "It's a very good place for my seniors to come."

Thank you to our generous sponsors

# L.L.Bean



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**Freeport Community Services**

53 Depot Street Freeport, Maine 04032

**207.865.3985**  
Community Programs and Services Ext. 205  
Donations Hotline Ext. 216  
Volunteer Coordinator Ext. 206  
Open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm



[fcsmaine.org](http://fcsmaine.org)



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**Freeport Community Services**  
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**neighbor to neighbor**  
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