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**State of Vermont**

Services

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

## **The Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living awards the third and final innovative housing pilot planning grant to Riverflow Community Inc.**

Waterbury, Vermont. The Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) is pleased to award Riverflow Community Inc. one of three [Act 186](#) pilot planning grants to develop new and innovative housing options for individuals with developmental disabilities. Act 186 of 2022 appropriated \$500,000 for housing and residential service pilot planning grants.

DAIL has awarded Riverflow Community Inc. a grant of up to 169,500.00 for this work.

Riverflow Community is a parent-led, owned, and operated 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. Elizabeth Campbell is a founding member of Riverflow Community, along with Jim and Amy Caffry.

Elizabeth has extensive experience managing a successful 501(c)(3) non-profit. With her late husband, she founded the Champlain Valley Down Syndrome Group, which now has over 70 families. Her leadership and expertise have been invaluable to the organization's growth.

Additionally, Elizabeth is the mother of a 25-year-old son whose Down Syndrome Regression Disorder significantly limits his ability to express, protect, and care for himself and who will require 24/7 oversight for the rest of his life.

After Elizabeth's husband was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor, their focus shifted to deciding their son's future in the event of her husband's passing. Elizabeth refused to let this daunting task overwhelm her. She sought support from other parents in Vermont who were navigating similar situations with their adult children who had significant developmental disabilities. Elizabeth found her calling through these connections and established the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (“DDHI”).

Elizabeth is dedicated to creating stable and supported housing options for adults with intellectual disabilities. She became a vocal advocate for this cause and was instrumental in the passage of Act 186 legislation and has paved the way for developing housing models where adults like her son can live in an inclusive community alongside their peers.

Elizabeth's journey shows the power of resilience and the positive change that can be achieved when individuals come together for a common cause. Elizabeth's story serves as a reminder that a meaningful difference can be made with determination and compassion.

The Riverflow Community's goal is to create an intentional living community where people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities live together in a setting that encourages independence and interdependence. It is her hope the Riverflow Community will provide stable and supported housing for adults with high support needs, whose diverse intellectual and developmental disabilities significantly limit their ability to express, protect, and care for themselves, and who thrive on stability and friendship.

The Riverflow Community project aims to plan a housing and service project in Monkton, spread across 30 acres. The project will strive to provide accommodation and services for a minimum of 15 people with developmental disabilities. The goal is for the services offered by the community to be geared towards promoting a meaningful life for individuals with disabilities by:

- Creating relationships built over time and nurtured through proximity, traditions, rituals, and fun.
- Providing meaningful work and responsibilities tailored to each person's interests and capabilities, along with the training and support necessary for vocational success.
- Creating access to creative expression via art, music, and theatre activities.
- Providing opportunities to care for each other's animals and the land.

Elizabeth believes the most crucial benefit of the Riverflow Community project is the sense of belonging it will provide to everyone involved. The project aims to become a

Camphill community, founded by the Caffry and Campbell families and guided by the leading intentional community consultant, Hannah Schwartz.

Act 186 pilot planning grant awardees include Upper Valley Services, Champlain Housing Trust, and Riverflow Community Inc., They have been selected to develop innovative housing plans for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Julie Abrahamson, the Developmental Disabilities Residential Program Developer, will oversee the grant awardees for the next year. Each awardee will provide a quarterly progress report to the DS State Program Standing Committee, and final implementation plans are expected to be delivered by September 30, 2024. Abrahamson expressed her enthusiasm for working with all the grant awardees and their team members. "She believes they can overcome any obstacle with determination, perseverance, and a commitment to work together and that by being unified through a collaborative effort they will bring a brighter future for those most in need".

Act 186 showcases a bold legislative action and an unwavering commitment to creating new and innovative housing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By working together with the State of Vermont, DAIL, stakeholders, advocates, and self-advocates to create and develop innovative solutions that will address the housing needs, bring meaningful change, and create an inclusive environment that empowers individuals with disabilities to participate and contribute to their communities fully.

***About the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL):***

*Our mission is to make Vermont the best state to grow old or live with a disability - with dignity, respect, and independence.*

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