

NEK TOGETHER

November 11, 2022

9 AM **Conference Welcome**
Jennifer Carlo, Northeast Kingdom Collaborative

9:15 AM **Plenary Panel: Seizing The Moment- Updates from the Recovery Action Plan and Looking Toward the Future**

In 2020, the NEK Collaborative worked with individuals and organizations across the NEK to create our Recovery Action Plan, built around five priorities: Broadband, Housing, Education, Small Business Support, and Community Vitality.

Much has been accomplished through the collective struggle of the pandemic, and the NEK as a region drew together to address our mutual challenges and support each other through the experience. We find ourselves now in a singular moment in time, to continue our healing and leverage unprecedented resources and opportunities in new ways toward a bright regional future.

This panel will discuss the progress made on the priorities of the Recovery Action Plan and our next steps into the future.

Sarah Waring, USDA Rural Development State Director, Vermont and New Hampshire, Facilitator

Broadband- **Christa Shute, Executive Director, NEK Broadband/Rob Fish, Deputy Director, Vermont Broadband**

Housing- **Patrick Shattuck, Executive Director, Rural Edge**

Education- **Tom Lovett, Retired Headmaster, St. Johnsbury Academy, and Member, Vermont State Board of Education/Representative from NVU**

Small Business Support- **David Snedeker, Executive Director, NVDA**

Community Vitality- **Jody Fried, Executive Director, Catamount Arts**

10:45 AM **Breakout Sessions**

A Vision for Vermont State University

Dr. Parwinder Grewal, President, Vermont State University

Dr Parwinder Grewal became the inaugural president of Vermont State University in July 2022. VTSU will combine and build upon the history of Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. Pending final approval of NECHE, VTSU will become a single accredited institution on July 1, 2023. The new University is meant to increase the reach of learning opportunities for all learners, fueling Vermont's economic pipeline, and

creating opportunities for learners of all ages. Join this session to learn more about President Grewal's vision for what will be the first statewide, hybrid institution in the United States.

Racial Literacy, A Healing Practice

Sha'an Mouliert, The Root Social Justice Center

Until the last few years, you'd hear, "We have made so much progress; I don't think racism is a problem anymore". How often have we heard, "I'm not racist", or "I have Black and Brown friends?" Most people fail to recognize or act on racial micro-aggressions because the stress of negotiating such conflicts is extremely high due to fears of incompetence, public exposure, and accusation. This introductory workshop will explore the challenges facing people of color living in Vermont. Using cultural humility practices, participants will be introduced to a foundational understanding to develop their racial literacy skills.

Raising Voices: Learning about Community Organizing

**Meghan Wayland, Lead Organizer, Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO)
Ally Howell, Food Sovereignty Organizer, NEKO and Center for an
Agricultural Economy**

Framing Challenging Conversations Through the Lens of the Arts

**Amy Cunningham, Deputy Director, Vermont Arts Council
Jody Fried, Executive Director, Catamount Arts and Film
Ryan Newswanger, Director of Programs, Vermont Humanities Council
Molly Stone, NEK Zone Agent, Vermont Creative Network**

Post-Pandemic Workforce and Business Leadership

**Julie Laforce, Owner and Director of Organizational Development, Built by
Newport
Abby Long, Executive Director, Kingdom Trail Association
Johnny Lotti, Co-Owner, Cafe Lotti
Steven Wright, President and General Manager, Jay Peak**

Leveraging Local ARPA Dollars - How to Make the Most of Your Money!

**Annie McLean, Community and Economic Recovery Specialist,
Northeastern Vermont Development Association**

Learn how to make the most of your local ARPA award by coordinating with other Federal, State, and Local funding sources and collaborating with community partners and other organizations.

12:00 Lunch/Tabling

1:15 PM Breakout Sessions

NEK Caucus Legislative Forum

Senator Jane Kitchel (D)- Caledonia/Orange District, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Robert Starr (D)- Essex/Orleans District, Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee

Representative Scott Beck (R)- Caledonia-3, House Committee on Ways and Means

Representative Michael Marcotte (R)- Orleans-2, Chair, House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

Join some of our veteran legislators from the NEK Caucus for a conversation about priorities and challenges in Montpelier in the coming session. What are the issues important to NEKers, and what can we anticipate in the coming year?

Moving Stories

Sha'an Moulert, The Root Social Justice Center

Stories have been a method of documenting and experiencing the human condition throughout the ages. In this problem-solving workshop, participants will experience a sense of agency and accomplishment through storytelling. They will have the opportunity to creatively explore their strengths, identify their challenges and develop a strategy to overcome obstacles.

Strategies to Address the Housing Challenges in the NEK

Dawn Cross, HomeOwnership Center Director, RuralEdge

Jim Kisch, CEO, President, Passumpsic Bank

Evan Oleson, NEK VT Program Manager, Northern Forest Center

Patrick Shattuck, Executive Director, RuralEdge

Housing is a challenge throughout Vermont, and especially in the NEK. Many organizations in the Kingdom are working on initiatives to increase affordable housing stock and create economic development in our communities.

Creating Community Space- NEK Outdoor Recreation Community Hub

Abby Long, Executive Director, Kingdom Trail Association

Brooke Pierce, Operations Director, Kingdom Trail Association

Learn how Kingdom Trails is putting into action the NEK Collaborative's Tri-Sector Plan, to enhance economic growth through rural community hubs. We believe that by investing in infrastructure improvements to create outdoor recreation-friendly communities, we can connect outdoor recreation assets to other parts of the economy, including the creative and food sectors. KT will share how their USDA-funded Capacity Study led them to-USDAs funded master planning for an NEK Outdoor Recreation Community Hub to elevate economic development, enhance visitor experiences, improve residents' quality of life, and support the local workforce.

Get NEKed! Using Destination Stewardship to Support Economic Opportunity

Joe Short, Vice President, Northern Forest Center, Facilitator
Gillian Sewake, Director, Discover St. Johnsbury
Pam Sullivan, President and Creative Director, Sullivan Creative
Rick Ufford-Chase, Director, Newport City Downtown Development

What are the benefits of marketing and destination stewardship on a regional scale? Recent collaborations have built on the work done in the NEK Collaborative's 2018 Tri-Sector Report to build regional resources, and help chambers and businesses leverage those resources to help support regional businesses. How do we collaborate to align messages, attract the right visitors, and multiply our individual efforts? And how do we sustain these efforts?

The Working Communities Challenge in the NEK

Juliet Emas, Director, St. Johnsbury Community Hub
Meghan Wayland, Lead Organizer, Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO)

2:45 **Plenary Workshop: Equitable Community Engagement**

Sue McCormack, Business Development Leader and Co-Founder, The Creative Discourse Group

Sponsored by the Working Communities Challenge

Transformed people transform organizations.

All of us are seeking ways to create equity, justice, and inclusion in our communities, and we need conversations and tools to do that. How do we come together and work toward a more equitable culture?

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Representative Scott Beck (R) of St. Johnsbury, Caledonia County, was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Upon completion of his undergraduate work at the University of Washington, he entered the United States Navy, and served until 1999 as a Naval Flight Officer. Scott made three extended deployments, and earned two Air Medals for combat missions flown in Bosnia and Somalia. He was also the recipient of a Navy Commendation Medal, two Navy Achievement medals, and numerous campaign medals and ribbons. Scott has flown over 1,100 hours in jet aircraft and has nearly 300 carrier arrested landings. Upon completing MEd degrees in social science and mathematics at The Citadel, Scott returned to St. Johnsbury with his family and became an educator, dorm counselor, and coach at St. Johnsbury Academy; he continues to work at the Academy today and teaches American history, American government, and economics. In 2005, Scott and his wife, Joelle, opened the Boxcar & Caboose, an independent bookstore in downtown St. Johnsbury. He has been the chair of the Downtown Improvement Commission and Executive Director of the St. Johnsbury Chamber of Commerce. He is the lead organizer of the St. Johnsbury World Maple Festival, coaches youth baseball, and is a champion for excellent education for all of St. Johnsbury's youth. He has served in the Vermont House of Representatives since 2014.

Amy Cunningham is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the Vermont Arts Council, working to bring the organization's strategic goals to fruition. She directs the programs team, manages the Vermont Creative Network, and is the contact for national advocacy efforts. Amy has worked for more than 15 years in leadership positions in Vermont cultural and educational nonprofits. Her educational background is in U.S. history and museum studies. When she's not at the Arts Council, Amy enjoys knitting, exploring Vermont, and overly ambitious gardening projects.

Jody Fried is both the Executive Director of Catamount Film & Arts in St. Johnsbury and Director of the Vermont Leadership Institute (VLI) and the Snelling Center for Government. His work as a volunteer in the Northeast Kingdom is extensive, including serving as a Corporator at Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital, Passumpsic Savings Bank and Lyndon Institute, current member (and past President) of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative, and as the past President of both the Burke Area Chamber of Commerce and the Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism Association. He has also served in various statewide leadership roles including as the current Chair of the Vermont Creative Network and as a Governor-appointed member of the Vermont Travel and Recreation Council, as well as having previously served as a founding member of the Vermont Tax Advisory Board. Jody is a graduate of the VLI Class of 2012 and a University of Vermont alum.

Jim Kisch joined Passumpsic Savings Bank on October 11, 2016 as Chief Executive and President. Prior to joining the Bank, he was Chief Strategy/Information Officer and Co-Founder for Continuity, a leading provider of Regulatory Technology (RegTech) solutions that automate compliance management for financial institutions of all sizes nationwide. Continuity has been a serial winner of the Marcum Tech Top 40 and Inc. 5000 growth awards, and won the 2015

fastest growing tech company in Connecticut. Jim started his career in banking 30 years ago. He held a variety of executive positions in the banking industry for over fourteen years before joining the Minnesota Bankers Association as the president of the association's Insurance and Service Division and Consulting Group; the association's wholly owned bank compliance and IT consultancy. Jim serves on the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum Board as Treasurer, as the Vermont Bankers Association's Second Vice Chairperson, Chairman of the Board of Northeast Home Loan, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital Corporation and Plymouth State University College of Business Advisory Board.

Senator Jane Kitchel (D), of Danville, Caledonia County, was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and grew up in Danville on the family farm. She is a retired public administrator and former Secretary of the Agency of Human Services. Jane was educated in Danville Schools, graduated from Danville High School and earned an AB from Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. She served as a Toll Fellow, Council of State Governments, in 1994. Jane is Former President, Board of Trustees, Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium (St. Johnsbury, Vt.); Secretary, Danville Chamber of Commerce; Corporator, Northeastern Vermont Regional Corporation; Fairbanks Museum Fellow; Board Member, Vermont Food Bank, Member, Board of Directors of the Northeastern Vermont Area Health Education Center; Member, Danville Congregational Church. She has served in the Vermont Senate since 2005.

Julie Laforce is the Co-owner and Director of Organizational Development at Built by Newport (BBN) in Newport, VT. She holds a B.A. in English Literature and began her professional career in 2000 as an educator at a public high school in the Northeast Kingdom. After taking time off to raise her two sons, she transitioned from education to an entirely new venture, joining her husband, David Laforce, in their furniture business Built by Newport. BBN is a privately-held wood products manufacturer currently employing 55 team members. It is a family owned business and was founded in 1963. The company is a made-to-order contract manufacturer specializing in design/build furniture and furniture components. Julie co-coordinates the annual strategic planning for the company and also leads the cultural development of BBN, recognizing that a healthy work environment is critical to success.

Abby Long considers herself fortunate that she has had the opportunity to live and work in a number of different environments. She has served all over the world; teaching in rural China, Southeast Asia, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, and Belize, as well as Gulf Coast restoration efforts through AmeriCorps post-Katrina. She holds a B.A. in Public & Community service from Providence College in Rhode Island, as well as a Master's Degree in Intercultural Service, Leadership & Management from the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Brattleboro. Abby is the past Athlete Service Manager for the Leadville Race Series in Colorado and Executive Director for the Leadville Trail 100 Legacy Foundation. Now she serves as the Executive Director for the Kingdom Trail Association, where she is motivated by her passion for outdoor recreation and abiding interest in the health and wellbeing of her community. She envisions a commitment to providing a safe, inspiring trail network to elevate the economic, social, cultural, and environmental vitality for the beautiful Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

Tom Lovett was named Headmaster of the St. Johnsbury Academy in 2001. Prior to that, he worked at the Academy in various capacities including Academic Dean, Assistant Academic Dean, English Department Chair, Director of the Advanced Placement Institute, Advisor Team Leader, English Teacher, Coach, and Head Dorm Proctor. He was a long-time consultant for the College Board, a member of the Commission on Independent Schools and one the Board of Directors for the New England Association of Independent Schools and the President of the Independent School Association of Northern New England. After his retirement in 2020, he has served as Interim Director and then Chair of the NEK Collaborative, Chair of the Good Shepherd School Board, member of the Vermont State Board of Education, and deacon for Corpus Christi Parish. He was named a Klingenstein Fellow and AP Teacher of the Year. Tom received an AM in English Language and Literature from Brown University and a BA in English and Humanities from Providence College.

Representative Michael Marcotte (R), Coventry, Orleans County, was born in Newport, Vermont, and has been a resident of Coventry since 1978. He is a businessman/store owner. He was educated at Sacred Heart Graded and High Schools, Newport, Vermont. Memberships and affiliations: Joined the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont Board of Directors in the spring of 2006; Chairman, Coventry Selectboard; Past DDGER National Elks; Past Exalted Ruler, Newport Elks; Past Chairman, St. Mary of the Sea Parish Council; Member, Gibbons Council Knights of Columbus 3rd Degree; Past Director, Coventry Town Foundation. Completed Council of State Gov. Eastern Leadership Program ELA Fellows; elected to Board of Directors of the Orleans/Essex VNA & Hospice in 2007; Elected President of the Board 2010. He has served in the Vermont House of Representatives since 2005.

Sue McCormack, as a co-founder of The Creative Discourse Group and a Senior Associate with Everyday Democracy, has spent her career working with municipalities, school districts, and organizations to design and implement productive conversations that lead to change. Sue is a student of the ways racism, implicit bias, and whiteness impact our public institutions, and has a special interest in helping people build their awareness and capacity to apply an equity lens to their community change work. She co-authored [Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation](#), an Everyday Democracy discussion guide being used around the country to help communities address race relations and racial equity. In recent years, Sue worked with The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Everyday Democracy, and Great Schools Partnership providing technical assistance to school districts around New England to build their capacity to create more equitable school systems. Previously, Sue served as Community Liaison for Creating Community Solutions, part of the National Dialogue on Mental health. She also co-coordinated the [Heart & Soul of Essex](#), a two year citizen led initiative funded by the [Orton Family Foundation](#) to identify shared community values, foster collaboration among two linked municipalities and increase civic participation. Sue also served as the Director of Leadership at the [Snelling Center for Government](#), coordinating the Vermont Leadership Institute (VLI), and the Vermont School Leadership Project. She has been privileged to serve on the faculty of the Vermont Leadership Institute since 1999, and is a 2005 graduate of VLI. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Skidmore College. She lives in Vermont and enjoys being outside (especially in the summer), dancing, biking, and building community with her friends.

Annie McLean is the Community and Economic Recovery Specialist at the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA). Annie leads NVDA's Municipal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Assistance and Coordination Program and is responsible for assisting Northeast Kingdom businesses and local governments access COVID-19 recovery resources and other economic development funding. Annie holds a Master's Degree in City and Regional Planning from California Polytechnic University and has over 10 years of community development experience. She previously served as Planning Director for the Town of Lyndon from 2016 through 2020 and has held various municipal planning positions throughout Vermont in addition to getting her professional start working as a disaster recovery consultant both with FEMA and in the private sector. Annie currently serves on the board of the Vermont Community Development Association (VCDA) and the board of Four Seasons of Early Learning, a non-profit early education organization offering nature-based preschool, infant and toddler care in Greensboro Bend.

Sha'an Mouliert, M.Ed. Originally from New York City, moved to the Northeast Kingdom with her family in 1983. For over 35 years she's been a consultant, community organizer, educator and artist. In 2015, she received Lyndon State College's Presidential Medal of Distinction and in 2021, the Rutland NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award. Currently, Sha'an is the coordinator of the I Am Vermont Too photo-story exhibit <https://www.therootsjc.org/i-am-vt-too> a project of The Root Social Justice Center, as well as, producer and host for I Am Vermont Too TV show https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=i+am+vermont+too Recently, Sha'an has facilitated Racial Literacy a Healing Practice trainings with several Vermont communities and organizations. She lives in St. Johnsbury.

Ryan Newswanger joined Vermont Humanities in September 2015 as Director of Communications, and he became the Director of Programs in 2022. In addition to managing the Programs Team, Ryan also produces the *Before Your Time* podcast series in collaboration with the Vermont Historical Society, and *The Portable Humanist* podcast series. Ryan came to Vermont Humanities after ten years at Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Lebanon, New Hampshire, where he was the Director of Web Services. Ryan was the Communications and Marketing Director at the Hanover Co-op for four years in the late 1990s and has also owned a graphic design and website production business. Ryan graduated from Goshen College with a B.A. in Communications, with a journalism emphasis.

Evan Oleson joined the Northern Forest Center in 2021 as the Northeast Kingdom Program Manager. In that role he manages the Center's revitalization activities in St. Johnsbury, VT, and contributes to other Center programs in the Northeast Kingdom, including Destination Development and the GetNEKedVT.com regional marketing campaign. Evan's focus is the intersection of business and society. His previous work spans industries including real estate and technology, with an emphasis on environmental sustainability and social impact. Evan holds a BA from Williams College and an MBA from the Yale School of Management. He lives in Danville, VT, with his family, and they enjoy all outdoor adventures including skiing, biking, and

hiking. He is a volunteer firefighter and sits on the Board of Link, a non-profit that improves access to bicycling and educates youth on bike mechanic skills.

Gillian Sewake is the Director of Discover St. Johnsbury, whose mission is to stimulate and promote the vitality of St. Johnsbury's cultural, commercial, and community resources. She leads the organization's efforts in destination marketing, event planning (including producing two all-new new event series in 2022, and support for St. Johnsbury's growing business community. She serves on the board of several local arts, culture, and community development nonprofits. After spending ten years in the New York City area working at various performing arts nonprofits, she returned to the Northeast Kingdom with her husband. They now reside in Peacham Village with their two children, and own Whirligig Brewing, based in St. Johnsbury.

Joe Short leads regional strategy and public policy initiatives at the Northern Forest Center, works in all our forest economy program areas, and oversees core operations. He first came to the Center in 2003 as a Doris Duke Conservation Fellow, and joined the staff full-time in 2004. He has combined his systems thinking, facilitation and project management expertise to lead numerous regional initiatives for the Center, including the Sustainable Economy Initiative (2006-2008), Northern Forest Investment Zone (2009-2014), the development of the Northern Border Regional Commission's strategic plan (2015-2016), and the Future Forest Economy Initiative (2019-present). Collectively these efforts have secured and guided the investment of tens of millions of dollars in rural economic development in the Northern Forest. Earlier in his career Joe worked for The Nature Conservancy, first in Nebraska and then in northern California. He has an M.S. in Resource Ecology and Management from the University of Michigan and a BA in Biology from Carleton College. Joe and his wife and two daughters live in Concord NH, where they spend as much time as possible outside in all seasons. Joe also performs with local choral and musical theater groups.

Christa Shute is the Executive Director of NEK Broadband. Prior to that, she served as a Staff Attorney for the NH Office of the Consumer Advocate. In that role, Christa worked electric, gas and water cases in front of the NH Public Utility Commission on behalf of residential ratepayers. Christa has two decades of experience in leadership in non-profit, and corporate entities. Her curiosity drives her to understand the complexity and nuance of situations so she can envision how to break through barriers and find win/win solutions. In addition to running her own design and manufacturing businesses, Christa has been the Vice President of Business Development for All Earth Renewables, the Director of Business Development and Financing for the Vermont Telecom Authority, and the Director of Targeted Implementation for Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (Efficiency Vermont). Christa Shute earned her JD, magna cum laude, in 2013 with certificates in Energy Law, Climate Law, and Dispute Resolution.

David Snedeker has been with Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) since 2007 serving as Planning Manager, Deputy Director, and now currently as the Executive Director. Prior to working with NVDA, the regional planning and economic development corporation for the Northeast Kingdom, David was the Administrator for the Unorganized Towns and Gores of Essex County. David has a M.S. in Geography (focused on regional planning)

from Western Illinois University and a B.A. in Recreation and Parks Administration from West Virginia University. He resides in the Village of Barton near Crystal Lake with his wife, son, and daughter.

Senator Robert Starr (D) of Troy, Orleans County, was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on December 17, 1942, has lived in Troy since June 3, 1944. He is the president of Starr's United, Inc., d/b/a Starr's Transportation. He was educated in elementary schools in North Troy, Vermont; North Troy High School; and Vermont Technical College, Randolph, Vermont (associate degree in agriculture). Member of: Troy school board; O.E.N.S.U. school board; Troy zoning board and planning commission; Board of Civil Authority; Troy town moderator; North Country High School, moderator; Vermont State College trustee; Vermont Truck and Bus Association, director; Elks Club #2155, Newport; National Conference of State Legislatures. He has served in the Vermont Senate since 2005.

Pam Sullivan is president and creative director of Sullivan Creative (SC), a woman owned business for 35 years. Under her leadership Sullivan Creative has worked on numerous destination marketing initiatives, currently SC is working under the guidance of The Northern Forest Center on the 2022 GetNEKed marketing campaign. Additionally, she has worked with many nonprofits, small businesses and organizations providing technical and marketing assistance, providing help with securing grants and funding. In 2019 SC was recognized by Google in their Economic Impact Report for the work they had done utilizing Google AdWords for Fuller's Sugarhouse in Lancaster NH. Pam has been an adjunct professor at many New England Colleges and Institutions: University of New Hampshire, Northeastern University, New England School of Art, and Design and has been a lecturer of marketing topics across the country.

Sarah Waring is a native of Glover, Vermont, and is the USDA Rural Development State Director for Vermont and New Hampshire. Sarah most recently worked as Vice President for Grants and Community Investments at the Vermont Community Foundation. Previously, she worked at the Vermont Council on Rural Development, Farm and Wilderness Foundation, and the Sonoran Institute. Waring also worked as the Executive Director at the Center for an Agricultural Economy. In 2020, she served on the Governor's Task Force for Economic Mitigation and Recovery where she supported the development of a toolkit for Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Waring resides in central Vermont.

Steve Wright has been the President and General Manager at Jay Peak since 2016. Since 2003 he had been the Chief Marketing Officer and prior to that held various leadership positions at Killington Resort. He has been working in the eastern ski industry for nearly 30 years and prior to that worked in mountain operations positions at Breckenridge Resort in Summit County, Colorado. He holds board positions at The Vermont Ski Areas Association, The National Ski Area Association, Newport City Downtown Development Corporation, Vermont Ski Museum, Northeast Kingdom Collaborative and North Country Hospital. He has BA and MA degrees in English from Providence College in Providence Rhode Island and presently lives in Newport Vermont with his wife Brooke and daughters Dehlia and Maeve.