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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Washington Electric Cooperative Triples Support for Community Food Programs**

*East Montpelier, Vt:* Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) is stepping up to help food-insecure Vermonters in its service area. WEC's Community Fund contributed \$3K over and above past funding to Barre-based Capstone Community Action and the Vermont Foodbank. Both nonprofits help Vermonters access nutritious food.

Food insecurity, or being unable to reliably access enough healthy food, is on the rise in Vermont due to economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to communications and public affairs director Nicole Whalen of the Vermont Foodbank, food insecurity in Vermont has increased 46 percent, and 60 percent for Vermont children.

That's why WEC gave an additional \$3,000 each to the Vermont Foodbank and to the Barre-based anti-poverty agency Capstone Community Action, effectively tripling its support. WEC traditionally funds both nonprofits, but decided to give again, and more, than it has in the past. "We felt these were extraordinary times, so we changed our focus to reflect our members' real needs," said WEC Board member Richard Rubin of Plainfield, who sits on the Community Fund committee. "The idea behind these grants is to provide direct benefits to people who need them."

The grants will be used to help Central Vermonters access nutritious food through various programs, including food distribution programs and Capstone's Chefs to Neighbors program, where chefs at local restaurants prepare free family meals for community members.

"The level of need is unlike anything we've seen in our lifetimes, or the history of the Vermont Foodbank," said Whalen. The support of the Foodbank's community partners is essential for feeding Vermonters, she said: "If it weren't for the help of partners like WEC, there's no way we would stand a chance in being able to make sure everyone who needs help right now has a place to turn."

"Food is a basic need. We're doing anything we can to help," said WEC General Manager Patty Richards. "One of our values as a cooperative is to give back to our community. The importance of neighbors helping neighbors is more important than ever. I'm grateful to our members who contribute to the Community Fund so we can turn around

and offer supports to our members in need through our community partners.”

Donations to WEC’s Community Fund come from member-owners who donate their annual capital credit refunds. The fund is administered by a volunteer committee of staff and Board members. In 2019, WEC’s Community Fund granted \$54,426 to 96 organizations in WEC’s service area.

To learn more about contributing to WEC’s Community Fund, call 802-224-2332.

To find food or to get involved, visit [vtfoodbank.org](http://vtfoodbank.org), [capstonevt.org](http://capstonevt.org), or dial 2-1-1.

**About Washington Electric Cooperative:**

Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility founded in 1939. WEC serves approximately 10,800 member-owners in 41 towns throughout Washington, Orange, Caledonia and Orleans counties with power generated from 100 percent renewable sources. WEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer. For more information please visit [washingtonelectric.coop](http://washingtonelectric.coop) or call 802-223-5245.

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