

Thank you to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

Our NHCF grant enabled us to learn, by experience and by study, an important key to civic engagement that we believe will sustain our organization into the future. We learned that voter apathy comes from a deep-seated feeling that engagement in public service and voting no longer matter in today's world. If people feel they cannot make a difference, *on their own terms* and *in accordance with their own values*, they seldom vote, run for public office or seek committee appointment. In a town of willing volunteers on so many other levels, we believe that our most important role going forward in Raymond VIP is to listen to our neighbors and discover together a new definition of what participation in the voting process can be when it is at its best.

Our upcoming pilot project will reach out to partner with two groups that research shows have the greatest potential for civic engagement: our senior residents and our young families with children. We have located leaders in two neighborhoods, and we hope to partner with them to form two teams to explore the topic of what makes a strong, resilient, fully engaged community.

What is working in your neighborhood? What is not working? What would you change about your neighborhood if you could? Raymond VIP wants to discover those answers with you and be a part of making a change, whatever you decide that change should be.

For more information about our pilot project, contact us via our website at www.raymondvip.org. And watch for more news, coming this summer.

Strategic Planning Update

As part of our strategic planning work for the future of Raymond VIP, some of our board members will be attending a workshop sponsored by the New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits on March 12, 2014 from 9 AM to 11:30 at the Audobon Center on Silk Road in Concord. Following the workshop, we hope to have an opportunity to consult with Beth Setinhorn, workshop leader, specifically about recruiting skilled volunteers for VIP. You can read about Beth and the work done by the Fixler Group at <http://www.jffixler.com/home>.

This workshop is part of the High Impact Volunteer Engagement program sponsored by the NHCNP and the NH Charitable Foundation and has come highly recommended to us by Laurette Edelman at NHCNP.

Strategic Planning for the Future of Raymond VIP

Strategic Plan comments are welcome!

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF) envisions “strong, just and resilient communities where residents give back to their communities and engage meaningfully in civic life.” (www.nhcf.org) As stated in our application for a 2012 NHCF Community Grant: “There can be no strength and no lasting justice when only eighteen percent of the people vote in local elections, many with little knowledge of the issues.” We sought funding to “support our operations short range, and to provide training and consulting services to help our board develop a long range strategic membership and funding plan.”

On September 25, 2012 the Foundation awarded \$3,500 to Raymond VIP to support Strategic Planning to Promote and Sustain Citizen Involvement in the Raymond Voter Information Project (#83051). Our goal is to build an active membership qualified to participate, in subsequent years, in each successive phase of our editorial process, from citizen reader, to reporter, to editorial committee member. Each election cycle requires involvement from (ideally) fifteen different citizens, with at least five new citizens rotating into the process every year. In addition, we must staff our volunteer board and our program coordinators.

We hope to have a plan in place by April 30, 2014 that will double our active membership and ensure an ongoing new member stream, as well as a funding stream to cover our operational needs. Our measure of success will be, not just the number of additions to our membership rolls, but the full engagement of those members in our editorial process.

Updates as our Strategic Plan develops will be posted here periodically. Please feel free to comment by writing to the board at info@raymondvip.org or phoning Carolyn Matthews at 603-244-2027