

***Valley Futures Network, New Citizen Initiative, Launches:  
Visit Their New [www.valleyfutures.net](http://www.valleyfutures.net) Web Site to Find Out  
How To Get Involved!***

Mad River Valley residents now have a new citizen group – Valley Futures Network - to help guide community and watershed planning into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Co-sponsored by the Center for Whole Communities, the Mad River Valley Planning District, the Mad River Chamber of Commerce, the Vermont Community Foundation, and Northfield Savings Bank, Valley Futures Network has constructed a web site to actively promote citizen participation and collaboration in crafting a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for the Mad River Valley – [www.valleyfutures.net](http://www.valleyfutures.net) - and invites all Valley residents to join in this emerging conversation.

The idea for the Valley Futures Network grew out of a summer 2007 retreat organized by the Mad River Planning District and held at the Center for Whole Communities. Their initial goal was to promote local leadership within Mad River Valley communities. “At last summer’s gathering, there were no guaranteed outcomes beyond two wonderful days of conversation,” remembers Laura Brines, one of two dozen Valley residents invited to participate in last summer’s retreat. “But at the end of our time together, we decided to roll up our sleeves and see if we might create a network to support a number of good ideas or projects already underway, and collaborate on new ones.”

The Valley Futures Network defines its mission broadly and inclusively.

**MISSION:**

**“The Valley Futures Network is a grassroots, citizen effort focusing on building a healthy and sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century future for our Mad River Valley communities. The initial goal of the Valley Futures Network is to build enthusiasm and support across the Valley around a common vision of our future. This vision includes certain critical success factors that are necessary in order to achieve health and sustainability: bolstering healthy local food; designing for energy conservation and independence; supporting a strong, resilient business community; crafting affordable housing for our workforce and young families; and preserving our land for conservation, wildlife and recreation.”**

**CALL TO COLLABORATION:**

**“While the Valley Futures Network has created an initial vision for a healthy and sustainable Mad River Valley community and watershed, it will be an evolving vision in which the whole Mad River Valley community can participate - with comments, suggestions, support, and collaborative work to help achieve the vision.”**

#### **SUPPORTING PILOT PROJECTS:**

**“A second major objective of the Valley Futures Network is to help launch and publicize tangible projects that will move the Valley’s vision from idea to reality. The new group will make available small grants as “seed” capital to facilitate demonstration projects or to test new ideas. The Valley Futures Network supports and builds on, rather than duplicates or replaces, the efforts of other individuals and organizations already working towards the health of the Valley. The MRVPD Executive Director and the MRVPD Steering Committee will work closely with the Valley Futures Network to coordinate and implement projects that move us towards our goals.”**

#### **PROMOTING AN OPEN FORUM:**

**“The Valley Futures Network third objective is to foster better communication for citizens across the Valley, as well as between public and private efforts. This coordination role will utilize the Valley Futures Network website, public forums, various leadership building initiatives, newspaper articles and other means to energize discussions about the Valley’s future. The Valley Futures Network is an open forum to explore, discuss and implement our valley’s best ideas for a healthy and more sustainable future – one available for anyone and everyone to use. We hope that everyone in the Mad River Valley will feel welcome to participate.”**

This is the mission of the Valley Futures Network.

#### **PUTTING IDEAS INTO ACTION:**

To move good ideas into action, the Valley Futures Network has created a number of citizen-led committees focusing on a variety of questions related to agriculture, energy, local currency, a land bank, recycling, habitat, and transportation. Interested citizens are

encouraged to contact the chairs of each steering committee with their ideas. "We are genuinely excited about the potential of this new network to serve as a citizens' voice in promoting dialogue and collaboration among Mad River's various stakeholders," explained Fayston Select Board member Jared Cadwell, emphasizing the importance of not replicating or competing with existing Mad River Valley projects and organizations already hard at work on many local issues. "Working together, the citizens of the Mad River Valley can craft a healthier and more sustainable future for ourselves and our children, and we invite any interested resident of the Valley to contact us to get involved."

After a several month period during this spring, a time for collecting ideas and building more connections among Mad River Valley residents and organizations, Valley Futures Network will officially launch its initiative with a celebration as part of Mad River's July 4 festivities, inviting any Mad River Valley residents to formally sign on to support this emerging project. In the meantime, the Valley Futures Network invites any and all interested citizens to join this conversation.

To find out how to get involved, please visit [www.valleyfutures.net](http://www.valleyfutures.net).