

The Buzz is Back

Buyers Buzz January 2016



News from the Top

How often are you faced with making a particular purchase and find yourself completely stumped as to how to even begin? We are as close as a phone call away if you need our help.

We also have a website where we post existing contracts as well as general information around and what could prove to be especially important to you, contact information for staff members available to assist you on your given purchase.

We hope you will familiarize yourself with our website and we welcome any suggestions you may have on its improvement.

For a list of all current commodity contracts go to [All Statewide Commodity Contracts](#)



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Procuring Vermont Products for The People By: Abbey Willard and Ali Zipparo Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Thanks to Vermont farmers and distributors, the Abbey Group and an inter-agency collaboration led by BGS and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM), there's a lot to celebrate about local food on State Street in Montpelier. Enosburg Falls based food service management company, the Abbey Group, has been serving healthy local food to State of Vermont (SOV) Employees, legislators, and other visitors at the Vermont Statehouse and 133 State St. for over a decade.

This food service management company has worked closely with VAAFAM over the past year, supplying procurement data for analysis, in an effort to satisfy the local product procurement tracking component of Act 38. Recent data analysis revealed that the Abbey Group's procurement of Vermont product makes up 30% and 19% of total food purchasing at the Statehouse and 133 State St., respectively. These numbers significantly exceed the SOV current average in local procurement, 7%, as well as the 2014 statewide value of local food purchases at 6.9%.

The new SOV Healthy Menu standards have been adopted at both of these locations, and have led to increased fresh, local menu options available to cafeteria customers. 133 State St. Manager, Ashley Sherman and staffer Dulcie Taylor say they appreciate that Vermont has companies like Upper Valley Produce who are able to supply fresh, local produce to their facility every day. That product availability allows Ashley and Dulcie to offer these items to their customers, who are increasingly seeking modified dietary options.

Ray Wood, (pictured right) Statehouse Café Manager, has been working under the golden dome for 9 years, and is always looking for creative ways to serve healthier, fresh, and local food. The café features Vermont products like Monument Dairy milk, Green Mountain Creamery yogurt, Cabot cheese, and Boyden Beef, along with a wide array of

local fruits and vegetables. During the legislative session, Ray feeds an average of 400 people a day, and loves every minute of it, saying "It's like cooking for all my best friends. I love being able to be creative with my menus, while also offering special items, to meet the dietary needs of my customers."

In 2015, Ray was awarded the Spirit of Americans with Disabilities Act Award by the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) for his commitment to hiring employees with disabilities. In a press release from the Abbey Group, Chris Loso of GCEPD and Nate Piper of Creative Workforce Solutions noted that Ray "is an employer who has a way of making his employees feel truly valued. While teaching culinary work skills, he also teaches skills that transfer into one's personal life, going above and beyond to help employees reach their own full potential."

VAAFAM expects that local procurement in state government will increase over the next several years with the growth of our local food movement and consumers become increasingly aware of where their food comes from and how it was grown. Both VAAFAM and BGS appreciate the Abbey Group's commitment to finding creative solutions to procure more Vermont product and willingness to work cooperatively with state partners to measure the amount of local food being purchased in the SOV.

