

**For Immediate Release: 8/15/2023**

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Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Initiative

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### **Declaration of Inclusion Initiative Members Honored by the Vermont Council on Rural Development**

Randolph, VT – The four members of the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Initiative today received the Vermont Community Leadership Award for their work to bring the declaration to all 247 communities in Vermont. The award was presented at the Vermont Council on Rural Development’s 2023 Vermont Community Summit at the Vermont State University Randolph Campus. The award is given to highlight the work of community members who epitomize the best spirit of local community service, who volunteer their time, and who have made their community better.

The statewide Declaration of Inclusion Initiative is spearheaded by four individuals – Norm Cohen, Bob Harnish, Barbara Noyes Pulling and Al Wakefield – all from the Rutland area. Harnish and Wakefield got the Initiative going in 2020 when they decided to begin asking every community in Vermont to adopt and implement the Declaration of Inclusion. As of July 25, 116 towns across the state have adopted the Declaration. More than 70% of Vermont residents live in those towns.

“We are honored and humbled by this award,” said Bob Harnish. “We want to thank the many organizations and people who have stepped up to help us spread our message that there are moral and economic reasons to adopt the Declaration.”

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Vermont Interfaith Action and various local diversity committees are among the supporters of the Declaration of Inclusion Initiative. For every community across the state the goals are the same: to raise awareness of the positive effects diversity can have on our communities, to tell the world that Vermont welcomes all people, and to build a stronger future for Vermont by attracting people with myriad skills and traditions to live, work, and raise families here.

“We will get to all 247 communities in Vermont,” said Al Wakefield. “We’re also committed to helping each of them put the Declaration of Inclusion into practice, whether it has already been adopted or will be in the future.”

For more information about the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion, go to:

<https://vtdeclarationofinclusion.org>

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