

Falls plants have technological improvements from ongoing investments over the years and the area has the best sustainable hardwood resources in the world, he said.

Because of these things and the productivity and quality in Orleans, Kathwari announced the reintroduction of performance raises this year.

"Those who have done a good job will get an increase," he said.

He said the new plant in Honduras, like the Mexican plant, turns raw resources into materials for the upholstery manufacturing plant in North Carolina, he said.

Without that Mexican plant, Ethan Allen would not have been profitable during the recession, he said.

The company's vertical integration, from bringing in raw wood at Beecher Falls, to wood work in Orleans to the company's own stores and interior designers, means it was able to survive and change in reaction to globalization and mass market changes.

The company is public but is fortunate in being able to think long term, Kathwari said, noting that he has served as CEO for 40 years.

Challenges remain for the company in Vermont, including the high price of electricity, at two times that in North Carolina and three to four times that of overseas where the price is kept down by government, he said.

Also the increasing cost of health care is a concern, he said.

The founders bought the Beecher Falls wood plant and renamed it Ethan Allen, a mark of the colonial American furniture the company made.

Kathwari said the company will unveil five new American lifestyle lines of furniture, from modern to classic—reflecting the global style of America today. Sneak peeks were available from the classic-lined wood chairs and tables and headboards, in Fiesta Ware type colors, and other beautiful pieces in various stages of construction at the plant Tuesday.

He hopes to see sales continue to increase, as they have for the past two years, he said by about 15 percent each year.

TRIBUTE TO RITA MARKLEY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, homelessness is not something found only in large urban areas or that is isolated to city limits; it is just as easily found in small towns and rural areas. Vermont, like the rest of the Nation, struggles each day with homelessness. It is estimated that in any given year, there are 4,000 homeless Vermonters, and on any given night, children, as well as adults, find refuge in a shelter.

The Committee on Temporary Shelter, known in Vermont as COTS, has been serving the homeless in Chittenden County since 1982. While COTS relies on the talents of more than 60 dedicated staff members, it is the tireless leadership of their executive director, Rita Markley, that is the heartbeat of this critically important organization.

I have been so proud of the work of Rita and COTS in their service to the people of Chittenden County. During her time with COTS, Rita has worked tirelessly to provide emergency shelter to those in need, while advocating for long-term solutions to end homelessness. Beyond providing emergency

shelter for those in need, COTS' prevention program extends a crucial safety net for those on the brink of losing their homes.

Under Rita's leadership more than 100 families found shelter through COTS in 2011, including 115 parents and 122 children. Since 2008, COTS' prevention program has helped 1,264 people to stay in their apartments and has stopped 55 foreclosures.

Rita is known throughout Vermont for her overwhelming generosity, tireless determination, and sharp sense of humor. She truly embodies the Vermont spirit, dedicating herself to helping her neighbors and reminding us that we are all in this together. Vermont is truly lucky to call Rita Markley one of our own.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of an article from September 20, 2012, entitled, "Innovation, and passion, in the nonprofit world," from The Burlington Free Press, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Sept. 20, 2012]

INNOVATION, AND PASSION, IN THE NONPROFIT WORLD—RITA MARKLEY OF COTS TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN A WORLD OF GREAT NEED, LIMITED FUNDS
(By Lynn Monty)

Work is missed when children get sick. Gas for trips to the doctor's office is costly. Rent payments become late, and medical bills loom. Homelessness strikes after a long list of setbacks in a person's life . . . a family's life.

Unforeseen expenditures happen to everyone, but when they come about on a fixed income it can cause a domino effect of devastation. Financial insecurity has plagued households nationwide since the economic downturn, and Burlington is no exception.

Rita Markley, 53, of Burlington knows all too well what our community has had to endure. She is executive director of the Committee on Temporary Shelter, where she's tasked daily with providing distressed people with emergency shelter and services, but her ultimate goal is to find long-term solutions to end homelessness altogether.

More than a hundred families stayed in COTS shelters in 2011. This included 115 parents and 122 children. An average of 53 people a day used the COTS Daystation, the only drop-in center for homeless adults in Chittenden County, before a storm flooded the Daystation in July.

Among her myriad responsibilities, and scrambling to find a new home for the much needed community resource before snow flies, surprisingly, Markley finds time to laugh.

Humor is part of the fuel she needs to forge ahead, to build community partnerships, and to get through tough times. "You might as well have fun while you are doing what you do," she said. "Laughter is a way to connect, and you feel better when you laugh. It makes you feel alive."

We spoke to Markley about these philosophies, her life and her innovations at the nonprofit in an interview at her North Avenue office on Sept. 5. A fuller version of this interview is available online at BurlingtonFreePress.com.

Burlington Free Press: What does an average day look like for you at COTS?

Markley: Very few days look the same. That's what I love about this job. Some days it's meetings with community partners, other days is brainstorming with staff, writing reports, looking at our numbers. I stay in touch with the people we serve. I advocate to fix problems that put ridiculous burdens on struggling families.

In the past five weeks, I've been running to every last corner of Burlington looking for a new Daystation.

Our whole approach isn't about how we help the homeless, that is the wrong premise, it's about how we can end homelessness. What can we do so that 20 years from now people don't need shelters in the first place?

BFP: What fuels your passion?

Markley: It's an underlying belief that everybody has infinite promise, and potential, and that they deserve a chance to try to reach that.

I spent the first five years of my life in an orphanage. I know I would be a very different person today without the volunteers who would come and rock the babies and read to us. They came three or four times a week to make us feel loved and special. I think I would have been one of those kids who could have otherwise fallen through the cracks, or given up, before I had even stepped out the door.

I was very lucky to be adopted by the Markleys. It was a privileged household, but I remember well what holidays are like when you don't have a home, like the home you read about in storybooks. Or when you feel embarrassed because of the fact you are an orphan.

When I think of the kids there, I still remember their names. I remember who we were and how much useful creativity, imagination and joy every single one of us had. We were encouraged when we could have been shut down. The volunteers and staff there really cared about what they were doing, and launched us into lives that became meaningful.

I know when you don't get the opportunities for college and travel and exposure that I was given by the Markleys, you can start out with that bright shining light, and it gets darker and darker as each year passes by, and you stop believing that there are better things that are possible for you. This underlies everything that I am.

I have never been a woe-is-me kind of person. I believe in joy, touching that joy, and touching what is most wonderful in humans who have the capacity to care about each other when we don't have to. There is no reason that most of the volunteers need to come to a place like COTS every day, but they do because they can't bear the idea that somebody is going to sleep in a car, or not have a chance without their support.

BFP: How would Burlington be different without COTS?

Markley: I believe in working toward a world where everybody gets a chance. A lot of the work and the way we do things at COTS is driven from the principles of finding that strength, that spark, to help people believe again that more is possible for them than simply a shelter bed and hoping they will have enough food day to day. To help them see that you cannot only survive, but have a rich life.

Without the work we do every day, Burlington would be a place with shelter upon shelter upon shelter with people never getting out in front of it. It takes so long to save for a security deposit, especially when you are only bringing in \$400 a week or less. We help people with this.

In 2008, COTS launched an innovative new prevention program with \$250,000 that we had been fundraising since 2005. We got tired of

seeing so many people miss paying rent because the alternator on their car went, or had to miss work because of a sick child. Homelessness is often the result of this unraveling.

The trajectory was so clear. Incomes were flat, or going down, and rents were going up. Utilities were skyrocketing, gasoline was going up, and it was a housing market where if you lose your place, there are 10 other people who want it. We saw this and started raising money.

Our goal in mind was to keep families whole, helping them keep in good financial standing and to regain their footing. We kept 293 families in their homes that first year.

Since 2008, COTS' prevention program has helped 1,264 people stay in their apartments and stopped 55 foreclosures. We break their fall.

Far more people than you see now would be sleeping in doorways without our services. There would be far more children without a fixed address. Even with this successful homeless prevention program in place, we still have people becoming homeless at a quicker rate than we can break their fall.

BFP: What sustains this organization?

Markley: The community sustains this organization. The people who come out to contribute time and money have such a profound impact on so many lives. The amazing thing about COTS is the people who come out to support it.

They are the ones who make sure no one in our community is without a safe, warm place to go during the worst of times. What sustains us is the belief that we are so much more together than we are alone.

It's because this community is far better informed about who the homeless really are. They know that the guy in the doorway might be a veteran, but we have more work to do as an origination. I think many Vermonters would be shocked to know that at the start of the school year last year there were 141 homeless children in our area, or that our waiting list is high right now.

That is the hardest part of this work, when you don't have enough to help everyone. Last year we had the least amount of money to give out for prevention, and all of the school systems felt it keenly because we were not able to keep the same amount of families stable because of state and federal funding cuts and donations were down.

BFP: In what other ways have you been innovative in your approach in leading COTS?

Markley: I have brought a lot of new constituencies to COTS. I look further up the stream. Where people are used to hearing nothing but no, I find a way to get to yes.

For people with really awful credit or behavior issues, every door is slammed. No landlord will take the risk. Instead of accepting that as a no, we figure out how to help people build relationships with landlords through a new risk guarantee program.

We ask landlords to take a chance on our clients who we know are a challenge. We put up all of the costs of an eviction as a guarantee, and hold it for a year and a half.

My goal is to make sure nobody loses the hope entirely that they will ever be back into housing. Once a person gives up, there is so little you can do. It's like a life lost prematurely. As long as we can hold out that carrot, you can work with people to change behaviors, to try a different approach, and to keep believing in themselves and in having a home.

BFP: If you could do anything you wanted to innovate at COTS, with no barriers, what would you do? The sky is the limit.

Markley: I would triple our prevention fund, and link it to our follow-up services two years out to make sure families are still doing OK. I would focus on employment ini-

tiatives and bring together more partnerships. I would integrate the use of technology and bring together the disparate programs right now that are hard to navigate.

PROTECTING ECONOMIC VITALITY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, shortly after the Senate recessed in September, a compelling article was published in the Burlington Free Press which I would like to share with this Senate.

John Ewing is a true public servant in Vermont. His vision and ability to work with diverse groups to protect Vermont's environment has been an inspiration to many. His September 30, 2012, column entitled, "I Believe" reviews the important steps Vermont has taken to achieve smart growth to help our natural resources and the State's economy hand in hand. John also looks to the future and what we must continue to do in Vermont to ensure we are planning for our best future possible with vibrant communities, a working landscape, and the natural beauty of our open spaces. Vermonters have a history of approaching these issues in a collaborative and objective fashion and I know that if we continue to do that we will be able to move Vermont forward to a bright and sustainable future.

John's column is a roadmap to how States can protect their natural heritage while maintaining their economic vitality. I ask unanimous consent that the text of this column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Sept. 30, 2012]

I BELIEVE: "ECONOMIC VITALITY AND PROTECTING NATURAL HERITAGE ARE NOT AT ALL INCOMPATIBLE"

(By John T. Ewing)

Vermont is defined by its natural beauty, its towns and villages and its working landscape. But the question always remains: Can Vermont encourage growth, provide jobs and at the same time retain these special qualities? Will we be able to avoid the negative impacts of unplanned growth and suburbanization?

When I first came to Vermont in the 1950s, the site of the Sheraton Hotel on Williston Road beyond the University of Vermont was a dairy farm. Burlington had three hardware stores, and its banks stayed open on Friday nights to accommodate the farmers who came to town.

So much has changed. And yet Vermont has worked hard to retain its traditional settlement patterns—its compact communities and a healthy working landscape.

State policy has long recognized the need to protect these special qualities. The principle of "compact settlement and a working landscape" has been imbedded as an official vision since the 1960s. Act 250, with its set of principles to guide growth, was enacted in 1972. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund was enacted in 1987 to pay for the conservation of farms and natural areas, and to invest in affordable housing in our villages and downtowns.

Under Gov. Madeleine Kunin, several efforts were made to strengthen state and

community planning, and under Gov. Howard Dean, the state provided substantial funding to conserve farms, forests and natural areas. Recently the Legislature enacted downtown legislation and growth centers to encourage growth in and around existing population centers and towns.

However, not all is rosy. As I traveled across the state as chairman of the Environmental Board in the late 1990s, the suburbanization of Vermont was all too clear in certain areas. So we founded the nonprofit Smart Growth Vermont (originally named the Vermont Forum on Sprawl) in 1998. Our aim was to work with the administration and the Legislature to better preserve our heritage, and to assist local communities in their planning and regulatory functions to more effectively guide their growth. This "smart growth" organization has now been merged into the Vermont Natural Resources Council, where its director, Brian Shupe, and his staff are well positioned to carry forward the initiatives and the tools we developed, and to work with individual towns.

The smart growth movement believes that the twin goals of economic vitality and the protection of our natural heritage are not at all incompatible. In fact, much of the success of Vermont is attributable to its beauty and special qualities, supporting all facets of economic activity: tourism, farming, businesses and jobs all integrated so that there is no need to sacrifice our basic values.

We are blessed in Vermont with so many organizations working together to achieve these goals. I doubt that any state is so well served by the quality of its leaders and its organizations. I have already mentioned the Vermont Natural Resources Council, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary; a sampling of other groups include:

Land trusts, such as the Vermont Land Trust and many of its local counterparts.

Conservation organizations: the Nature Conservancy and countless similar groups.

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility.

Preservation Trust of Vermont.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development and its initiative on the working landscape.

The housing nonprofits, exemplified by the Champlain Housing Trust.

The "buy local" food movement, which is so important in ensuring that our land resources are used productively.

There's also the important Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, which over the years has contributed to the development or protection of:

10,750 permanently affordable housing units.

144,000 acres of agricultural lands.

253,000 acres of natural areas and recreation.

57 downtown historic properties.

And most importantly, there are the local planning commissions, zoning boards and town councils that are on the front line in confronting the complex proposals in their communities.

There always will be apparent conflict between growth and preserving the Vermont that we cherish. A current example involves the proposals for industrial wind power, fields of solar collectors, and bio-mass. There is an obvious conflict with those who cherish our ridgelines, mountains, forests and fields.

I believe these tensions can be relieved if we correct the current lack of planning and develop a more impartial regulatory system. As we have done in the past on other issues, Vermont can integrate the need for renewable energy with the environment if we provide the planning, systems for approval and opportunity for citizen involvement.

Compact and vibrant communities, natural beauty and a working landscape: I believe we