

TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and Vernon Public Works Employees Team up to Distribute 21,000 Pounds of Fresh Produce to 1,400 seniors and families

(Vernon, Connecticut) – Vernon Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and Vernon Public Works employees teamed up Tuesday to distribute 1,400 boxes of fresh produce to senior citizens and families in Vernon, Hartford, Ellington, Coventry and Stafford.

The fresh produce – heads of lettuce and cabbage, bags of carrots, apples, onions and potatoes and a stalk of celery – was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Farmers to Families Food Box program.

About 89 million boxes of food have been distributed to families around the country through the USDA program intended to serve those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.



Vernon Mayor Daniel A. Champagne loads a box of produce into a car outside the Cornerstone Foundation headquarters on Prospect Street in downtown Vernon.

It's the second trailer load of food Mayor Champagne has been called upon to help distribute. He said he received a call from the USDA last week informing him a trailer of fresh produce was available. The Mayor then went to work lining up agencies and organizations to distribute the food to people who needed it.

"I reached out to the housing authorities and to community leaders in neighboring towns to distribute the food to senior housing facilities and food pantries," Mayor Champagne said. "It was a great opportunity to get 15 pounds of fresh apples, carrots, celery and other items to seniors and families in our community."



Vernon public works employees join Mayor Daniel A. Champagne and Hockanum Valley Community Council Chief Executive Officer David O'Rourke outside the human service agency's Vernon headquarters. Pictured left to right are: DPW employee Andrew Green, O'Rourke, DPW Foreman Mark Rizzo, Mayor Champagne, DPW employees Tim Moriarty, Paul Niemann, Sam Genovese and DPW Lead Road Foreman Jeff Schambach.

The Hockanum Valley Community Council and the Cornerstone Foundation, both in Vernon, received hundreds of boxes of produce to distribute to families.

And a crew from the Vernon Housing Authority picked up 300 boxes of food to deliver to housing authority residents. Immanuel House of Hartford and Rose Commons and Welles Country Village, both of Vernon, received food for senior residents too.

Some food is still available and people are encouraged to call the Cornerstone Foundation at (860) 871-1823 or the Hockanum Valley Community Council at (860) 870-7940.

Vernon Public Works employees were key to getting the job done. The truck carrying the produce arrived Tuesday morning from New York and had been loaded in a way that made unloading it difficult. The team of public works employees used brute strength, a variety of tools and the fork lift attachment on a front end loader to unload the trailer.

“I can’t thank our public works team enough,” Mayor Champagne said. “It was a big job and they did what had to be done to get the truck unloaded and the food boxes on their way to the people who needed them.”



Vernon Mayor Daniel A. Champagne pauses for a moment while loading boxes of fresh produce into a pickup truck for delivery to Ellington’s food pantry.

At the Cornerstone Foundation, Mayor Champagne joined with Executive Director Sharon Redfern and her staff and volunteers to distribute the fresh produce to families. The Cornerstone Foundation offers a variety of services to people, including a food pantry, a soup kitchen, a diaper bank, a teen center, a clothing bank and a homeless shelter.

“To be able to get a box like this of really fresh beautiful produce is huge because it’s something a lot of people can’t afford on a limited income or even on SNAP,” Redfern said, referring to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. “Fresh produce is extremely expensive. If you’re on a limited income and you’re trying to eat healthy it’s very hard.”

The Cornerstone Foundation reached out to families through social media to let them know fresh food was available. One volunteer delivered about 40 boxes of produce to friends and neighbors.

“I’m so glad Mayor Champagne has been able to make these arrangements and include us,” Redfern said. “Not only did he make the arrangements, but he came and helped give some of it out, which was really nice.”



Vernon Mayor Daniel A. Champagne signals to Andrew Green, a Vernon Public Works Department front end loader operator, as Green lowers a pallet of fresh produce into a Vernon Housing Authority pickup truck for delivery to housing

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and well-being of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Recently designated as a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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