

GANAS

A RESOURCE BOOKLET FOR CURRENT AND
FUTURE GROUP MEMBERS



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— INTRODUCTION —

Conceived in the fall of 2014, GANAS—a Spanish word meaning motivation to act—is an educational campaign by a group of Bennington College students and an opportunity for community building. As a student-led organization, its mission is “to build a community of students, Latino migrant workers, and local organizations focused on promoting access to services and recreation for migrant workers, and to foster cross-cultural exchanges between Spanish and non-Spanish speakers.” Latinos constitute the fastest growing minority in the United States. In fact, the Census Bureau projects that by 2050, there will be 400 million people in the country, a third of them being of Latino origin. Currently, there are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States, the majority of whom come from Latin America. While this population is not as visible in Vermont as it is in other states with higher Latino populations such as California and Texas, there is still a significant number of Latino migrant workers living in this state and contributing to its economic prosperity. According to a report submitted to the Vermont State Legislature in 2013 by the Green Mountain Care Board, there are approximately 1,500-3,000 undocumented migrant workers supporting the Vermont dairy industry. Most of them are single young men from Latin American countries such as Guatemala and Mexico. Research on this population and our experience working with them has made evident the degree to which Latino workers lack access to basic services, are in need of a community of support, and live in conditions of linguistic and social isolation.

Functioning in the context of an academic tutorial, and supported by the Advanced CAPA Workshop, the work of GANAS students has gone through various stages since last year. Back in the fall of 2014, GANAS was a group of six students working towards building a structure that would support both the volunteer and research-based aspects of our work. Our focus was mainly on establishing and coordinating a system of volunteers by building partnerships with the Vermont Migrant

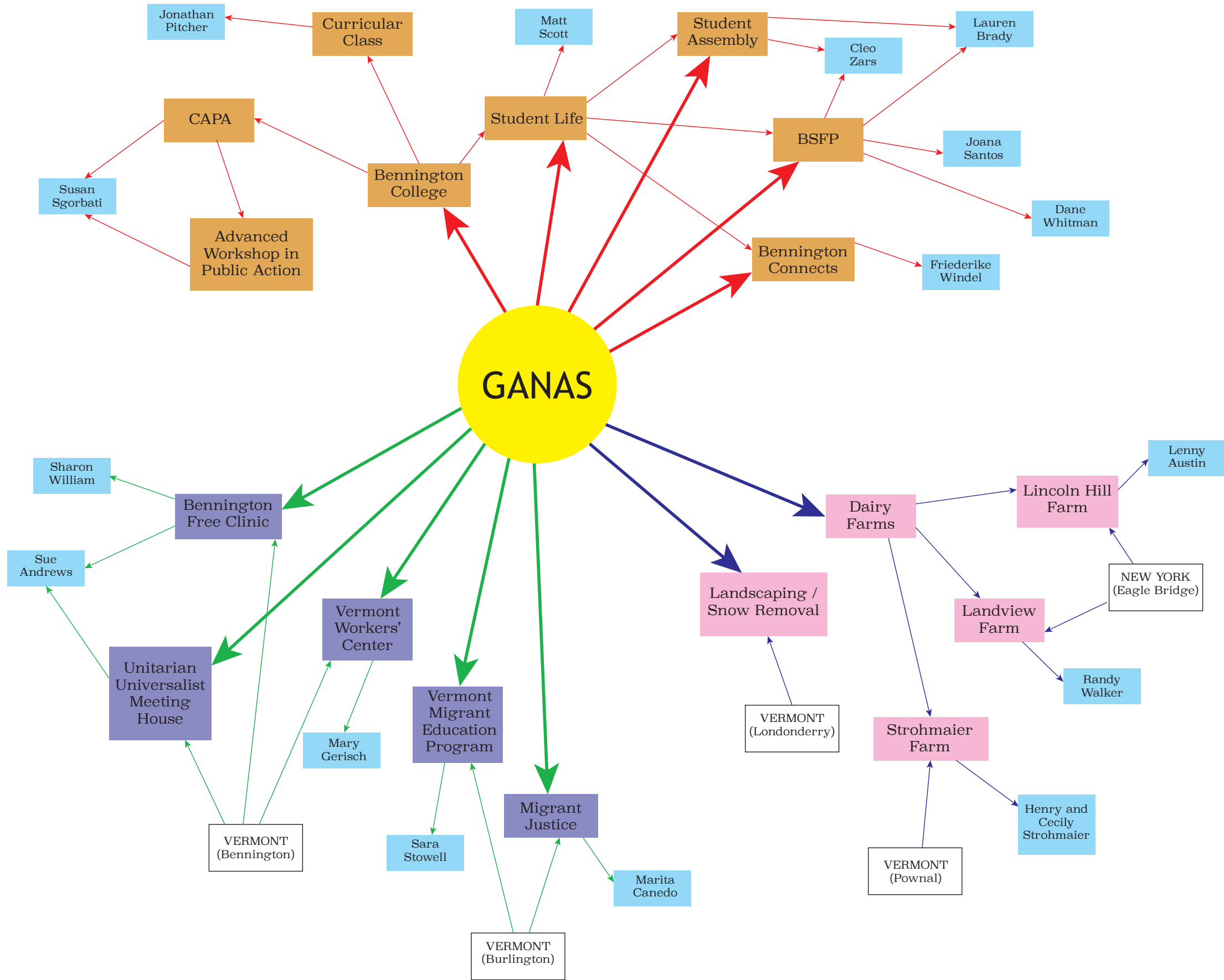
Education Program, the Vermont Workers Center and the Bennington Free Clinic. Through this system, students within and outside GANAS would be able to volunteer as ESL teachers, medical interpreters, or activists in defense of the rights of Latino workers in Vermont. The focus this spring has shifted towards a more project-based approach, with a tutorial of six students and a few volunteers supervised by faculty member Jonathan Pitcher. Building on a community dinner we organized in town in the fall, this academic term has been devoted to expanding our outreach to migrant workers and offering specific services, such as assistance with applying for a driver's license, financial literacy workshops, community gatherings (e.g. Easter brunch and occasional home visits), interpretation for the Free Clinic's annual Free Dental Day and on site interpretation and mediation between farmers and Latino workers regarding wages and income taxes. We have also begun research projects related to health care of migrant workers, inter-college comparative studies, and are becoming part of a state-wide network of students, social workers and activists working together on campaigns to promote milk with dignity, quality housing, fair wages and basic services for migrant workers. While some projects are still in their planning stages, the goal is to continue refining and implementing them this coming fall. Finding areas in which students' various interests can intersect with research or community oriented volunteer work has been a continuous challenge for GANAS. However, building community has always been at the forefront of our definition of public action.

The structure of this booklet is as follows: first, we will present an overview of GANAS and its various components in the form of visual complexity maps, accompanied with more detailed descriptions of each of its elements and important details to keep in mind. This will help the reader understand the multiplicity and overall constellation of actors involved as well as the various layers of our work. Next, we will delve into the history of the organization: how we got here, our achievements, the challenges we have encountered, and some general ideas about the future (which are expanded in the folder titled "Proposals for the Future"). Following that, we will discuss

how research and action have been inseparable components of our public action work and how we have used both experiential and theoretical research to take action throughout our journey. We end with some final thoughts about where GANAS is heading in the near future and what we have learned by being part of this group of highly motivated and engaged students and volunteers.

This booklet is meant for anyone interested in working with or learning about Latino migrant workers across the United States, from student groups to researchers and political leaders. It is also directed towards those who are just curious about the topic of migration from Latin America to the United States, and of how its elements can change the social fabric of each state, in this case, of Vermont. Finally, its content was written and developed by current GANAS students for future GANAS students. Our hope is that the resources we have built individually and as a group will help our future members and volunteers take their own initiative and start projects which they consider important, while also building on background research and using examples of work done in previous years.

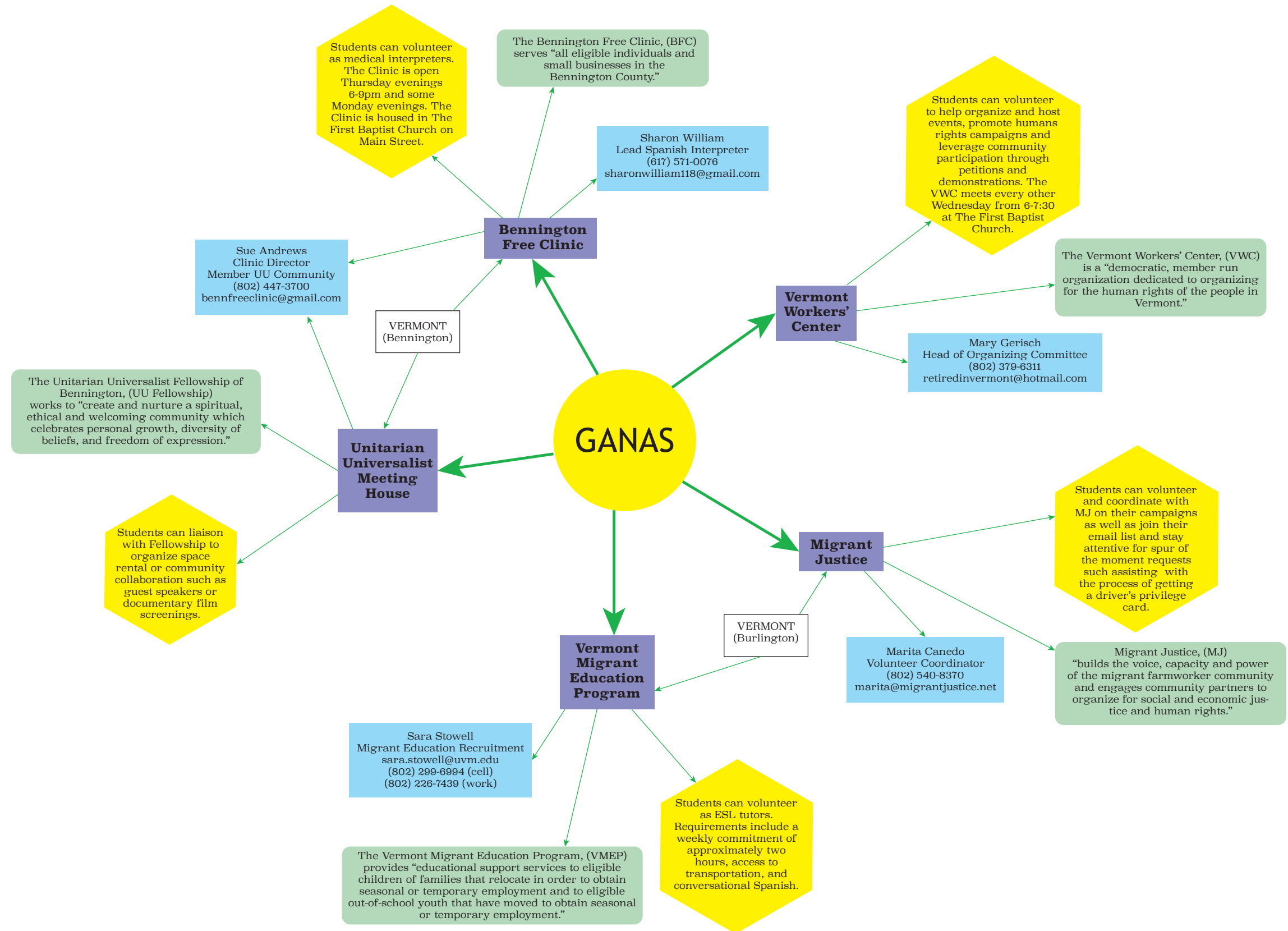
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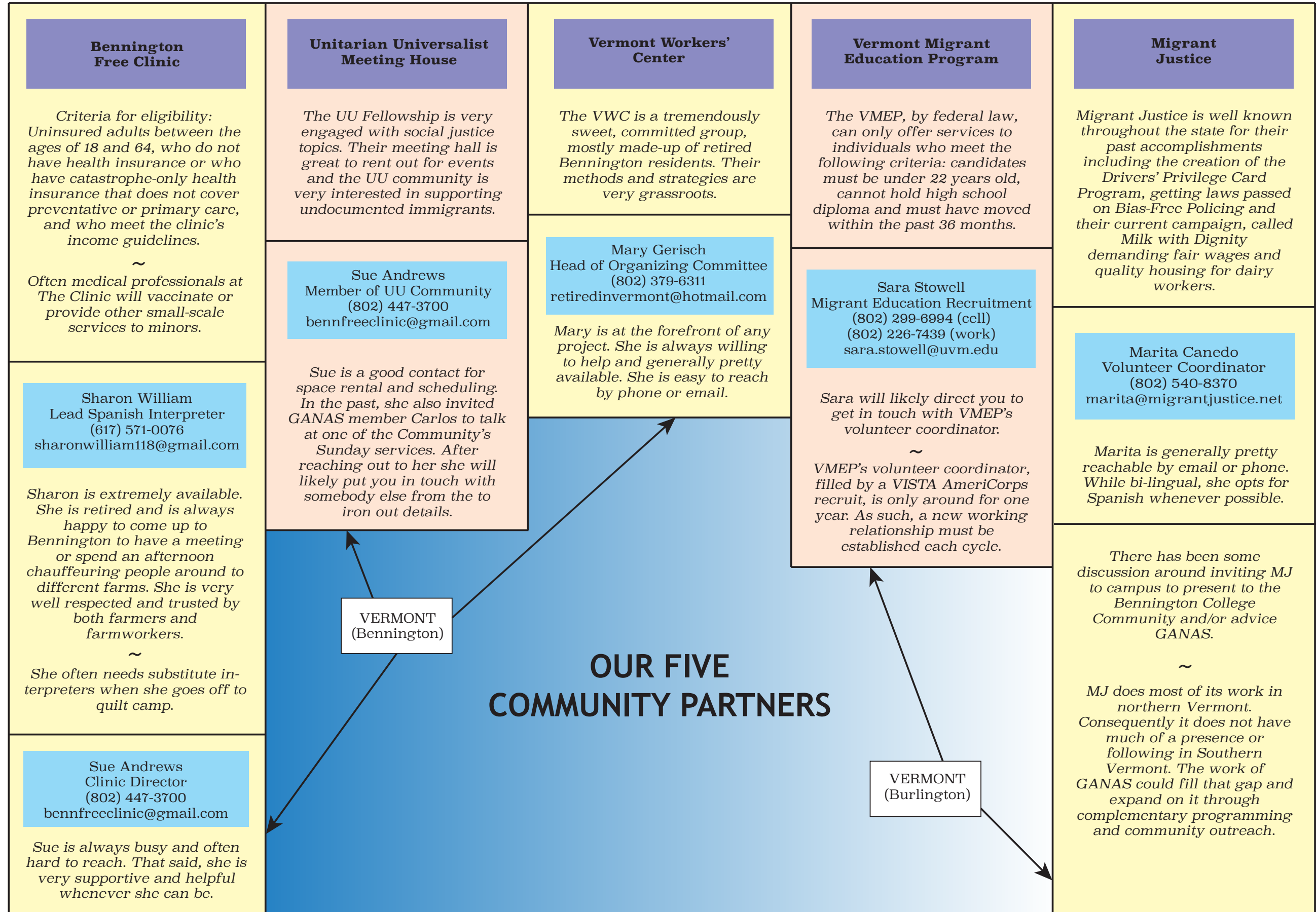
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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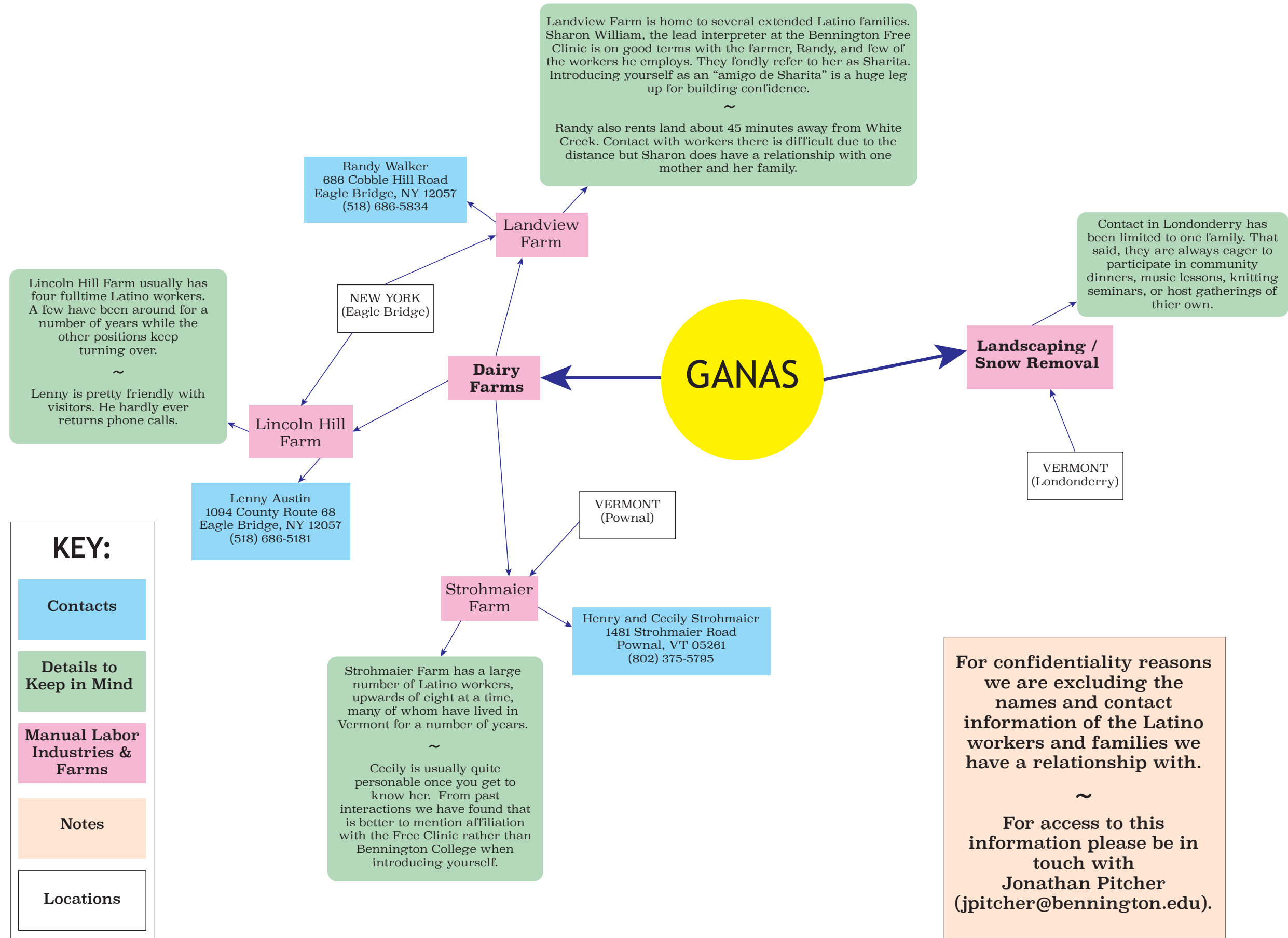
- Contacts
- Opportunities for Involvement
- Descriptions & Mission Statements
- Community Partners
- Locations



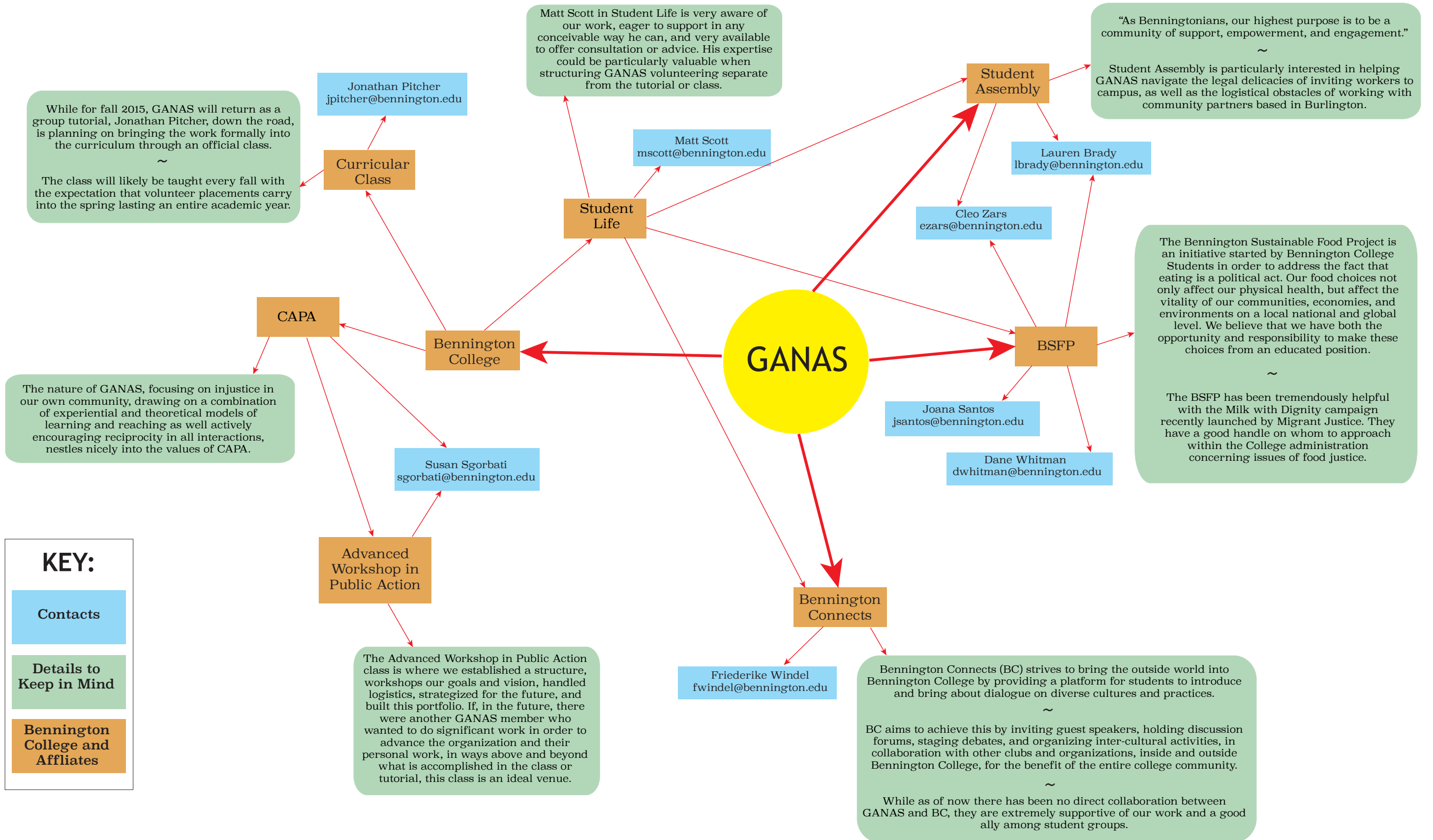
DETAILS TO KEEP IN MIND



LABOR INDUSTRIES & FARMS



BENNINGTON COLLEGE AND AFFILIATES



HISTORY

The first rumblings of GANAS really began in spring of 2014 when two of our founding group members, Carlos Mendez and Andrea Tapia became heavily involved as medical interpreters at the Bennington Free Clinic (BFC), a medical facility in Bennington, Vermont. Another key founding member, Tess Morrison, one of the first students to start celebrating Latino culture on campus in any sort of formalized way, had also previously reached out to the Vermont Migrant Education Program (VMEP) to get students involved as ESL tutors on local farms. This is all to say that well before any tutorial, group, student organization or structure was in place, we were keenly aware of the presence and importance of Latino farmworkers in the Bennington community.

Fall 2014, three other individuals joined the ranks of Carlos, Tess and Andrea to form the first tutorial group. These were Selina, Nina and Celene. While Susan Sgorbati generously sponsored the tutorial, the two of us —Andrea and Selina— largely took responsibility for facilitating and organizing meetings. Susan was only able to attend every other week. At this point in time GANAS functioned more as a club than a class. It was incredibly difficult to find a good meeting time and a good place to meet. Initially meetings were hosted over dinner on Monday evenings in Shingle. This changed to Thursday over dinner in the Student Center and finally landed on Sunday afternoons in Barn 215. Constant changes of location and time, variable weekly commitments and the lack of a constant faculty presence all contributed to an overly flexible structure that lacked consistency. There was an insufficient amount of accountability and it was difficult to find the group's identity. Almost every week the mission statement underwent revisions. Was GANAS a gateway for services, a connector, a bridge, a group of activists or a collection of volunteers? How could we create clarity both internally and externally?

The legality of the group's endeavors was also something that we struggled with. Could individuals come to campus for DACA workshops? Could ESL tutees

take advantage of on-campus resources such as the pianos in Jennings or the books in Crossett? How exactly did GANAS fit into the structure of Bennington?

These challenges were amplified by the fact that neither of us knew how to balance group leadership while also working to establish GANAS as a legitimate and recognizable student organization. The administrative tasks of maintaining professional relationships with our community partners, organizing team tasks, and planning for the future were more akin to a student leadership position than just a tutorial participant. We explored ways to alleviate some of this overwhelming ambiguity by pitching a curricular class for the Spring 2015. Ultimately this did not go through but the group tutorial format was revised by us and Jonathan to include readings, regular meetings times, oversight from Jonathan Pitcher and a model for group members to pursue individual projects.

Our main accomplishments of fall term were a couple of different events that GANAS was part of and organized. In early October, shortly before elections, The Vermont Workers' Center, along with GANAS as a co-host, held a candidates forum to allow the public to pose questions and concerns to community members running for State Representative and Senate. Our group member Carlos Mendez presented testimony on undocumented immigrants living in the state of Vermont.

The second event occurred late in the term, the first weekend of December. We hosted a community dinner for volunteer students, farmers, farmworkers and their families, as well as any other undocumented immigrants the group had contact with who might be involved in different labor industries such as landscaping or food services. The event was held at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House downtown. Unfortunately bad weather kept most guests away but a small crowd did show and seemed to enjoy the food and company.

Spring term marked the start of the new tutorial format. As mentioned earlier, all of us, group members, are now required to propose and carry out our own projects, crafted around our interests and intersecting with the goals and the mission

of GANAS as a whole. This individualized, interest-based model is inspired by the Bennington's Plan Process. The projects pursued in Spring 2015 include:

- ❑ A podcast featuring diverse and rich experience of a few Latino migrant workers.
- ❑ A comparative study of student groups doing similar work to GANAS at other colleges and universities around the state.
- ❑ A collection of data available for a potential assessment of the health status of this population near Bennington.
- ❑ A comprehensive reading list covering the different dimensions of migrant labor and US/Latin American relations.
- ❑ Bilingual Financial Literacy workshop materials.
- ❑ ESL Tutoring at Strohmaier Farm in Pownal, VT.
- ❑ An artesanía club/facilitated skillshare for exchanging handwork expertise, patterns and projects.
- ❑ Campaign work with Migrant Justice, The Vermont Workers' Center and The Bennington Sustainable Food Project on Migrant Justice's recent Milk with Dignity Campaign calling on large corporations to pay back a premium to farmer and farm workers.

In the future, our hope is that GANAS will be offered as a formal class taught yearly by Jonathan Pitcher. There are still too many details to work out before this transition can take place. The general format of grounding students in the academic literature of this issue while also requiring that they locate themselves within the context of Bennington through regular volunteer work are the key components of this course. The idea is that students have their own firsthand experiences with the local Latino community and that this project bridges both the classroom and community experiences.

— RESEARCH AND ACTION —

Taking an interdisciplinary approach to research has been essential to understand the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the type of work required to focus on the national issue such as the one GANAS is addressing. As this section will illustrate, there are various aspects to this issue, which point to the need to take immediate public action in the form of community-building. Hence, we have drawn our research from various sources, such as healthcare reports, migrant educational handbooks, literature on transnational migration, and our firsthand experience as student-activists who have established relationships with Latino migrant workers. The following section will present an overview of the main contributions of each type of research in helping us contextualize and locate the various pieces of this constellation of information and people. In our view, research and action cannot be separated within our work — they are constantly influencing each other and determining our mission. Therefore, the following discussion intertwines the research we have done with the actions we have taken as a student group in response to the problems which we consider to be the most pressing.

A NATIONAL ISSUE DEMANDING IMMEDIATE PUBLIC ACTION

There are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States, the majority of whom come from Latin America. According to the report by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research on barriers to affordable care for immigrant populations:

“In California, where almost one-quarter of the nation’s undocumented immigrants reside, data show that, as compared with lawful permanent residents (LPRs), naturalized citizen immigrants, and U.S.–born nonelderly adults, undocumented immigrants: have the highest rates of poverty (57%); and have the highest rate of being uninsured (51%).”

In addition, the same report found that compared with the other groups, access to health care in California is significantly worse for undocumented immigrants. For this reason, immigrant rights groups across the country are currently fighting for the inclusion of undocumented U.S. residents in the Affordable Care Act, since at the moment, they do not benefit from its implementation.

The case of undocumented immigrants in Vermont is not much different from that of California. While less undocumented immigrants reside in Vermont compared with California, there is still a significant population here who provides a notable contribution to Vermont's economy. There are approximately 1500-3000 undocumented migrant workers whose work turns profits for famous Vermont brands such as Ben & Jerry's and Cabot Cheese. Because this type of labor is not seasonal, dairy migrant farmworkers have no access to work visas, meaning that most remain undocumented. According to research done by Middlebury student Garrett Werner: "Milk alone accounts for 80% of Vermont's farm production, and Mexican immigrants account for approximately one third of the dairy farm labor." Werner also points out that dairy farmers have noted the importance of Latino migrant workers in order for Vermont's economy to stay afloat. Our conversations with a few farmers have echoed this claim. The report submitted to the Vermont Legislature by the Green Mountain Care Board in 2013 also notes that Vermont's overall migrant farmworker population has changed significantly in the past decades because of the dairy farm labor shortage and plummeting of milk prices that have placed downward pressure on farmers who are now unable to hire as many people as they did in the past. Since the last decade, Latino workers living and working on Vermont's 995 dairy farms (or farms located near the border between Vermont and New York) have produced more than 50% of the State's milk. Moreover, the report stated that Latino dairy workers currently constitute the majority of migrant workers in Vermont.

THE CASE OF VERMONT: A BURGEONING UNDOCUMENTED LATINO POPULATION

▣ DEMOGRAPHICS

One of the first challenges we encountered when trying to define this population was finding out how many migrant workers currently live in the area. As the Green Mountain Care Board report points out, estimating the total number of undocumented immigrants living in Vermont is hard given that immigrants are concentrated in just a few counties. Besides, the Department of Homeland Security keeps limited data specific to states whose migrant worker population is smaller than others. Moreover, certain characteristics of the undocumented immigrant population in Vermont limit the amount of data that can be obtained. For instance, the vulnerability derived from having an undocumented status pushes migrant workers to avoid detection and remain in the farms where there is less likelihood that they could be detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Additionally, this population tends to be transient, perhaps because of the short tenures within the dairy industry or because they decide to take other jobs involving different kinds of manual labor (e.g painting houses, landscaping or snow removal), which, as we have noticed, grant them more freedoms and benefits.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that given the geographical location of Bennington, and its closeness to the border between New York and Vermont, many migrant workers who we have met through the Bennington Free Clinic (BFC), and in places such as Walmart and China Wok, come from towns 15-20 minutes away from our campus, but which are located in the state of New York. As we have been able to conclude, this does not mean that the type of work or obstacles to access basic services are any different from those experienced by migrant workers in Vermont. In fact, some of the workers we have met who live in areas nearby within New York work in dairy farms that provide products to Vermont's major brands. This has shown us that in cases such as this, state borders become almost irrelevant. Nonetheless, when it

comes to state legislation that benefits migrant workers —such as obtaining a driver’s privilege card (essentially a driver’s license) without a social security number or having access to free English tutoring— borders and location do matter. Vermont’s law allows undocumented workers to obtain a driver’s privilege card, while New York does not.

Data provided by Migrant Justice, the Green Mountain Care Board, and the UVM Bridges to Health Program suggest that the size of this population (migrant workers from various nationalities) ranges from approximately 1500 to 3000 people. The majority of them, however, are from Latin American origin. As one of GANAS’ students, Celene Barrera, points out in her research paper:

“It is estimated that an influx of Latino farm workers arrived in the 1990s to address a labor shortage in the dairy industry; in the late 80s, the US Department of Agriculture tried to reduce the national milk shortage, closing down numerous farms in the process. Since then, Vermont has seen more and more migrant labor surface to work in the dairy farms.”

This demographic is predominantly young (with a median age of 28) and 93% are male. Green Mountain Care reports that 96% of the migrant workers who are parents are separated from their children while living in Vermont. In terms of origin, most workers come from southern Mexico and a smaller percentage comes from Guatemala and northern Mexico. Spanish is the language spoken by 89% of them while 11% speak an indigenous language but are still fluent in Spanish. English proficiency is not common among migrant workers; 89% report low levels of English language ability (Green Mountain Care, 2013). The educational level of most workers is very low, which can be concluded based on the fact that half of them have had less than a 9th grade level of education.

The type of work performed by migrant workers is characterized by being constantly strenuous and demanding, not allowing time for recreation and community life. Latinos usually work 14-hour days, six days a week, for \$7.50 an hour and receive

on-site, farm housing as part of their compensation. Seventy percent of workers who were interviewed by the Bridges to Health Program reported not having a full day off in any given week. Yearlong tasks include: milking and feeding cattle, as well as cleaning barns and taking care of young calves. Interestingly enough, academic research and our conversations with them have indicated that workers have little previous experience with agricultural work. In fact, most seem to have to learn the terminology used in dairy farming (in English) and the tasks associated with the job within less than a week.

❑ *LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE*

Latino workers also experience a series of barriers when trying to access basic services such as healthcare. These barriers include fear of immigration enforcement, language, lack of transportation, and lack of access to state health care services due to their undocumented status. The current debate on whether Green Mountain Care will cover undocumented immigrants is still unfolding, however, it seems unlikely that any benefits will only be granted in the short term. Survey data from Migrant Justice has shown that workers face physical and psychological health problems due to their work. Researchers Daniel Backer and David Chappelle have also pointed out that migrant workers have a high risk of injury because of the use of heavy equipment and proximity to large livestock in their day-to-day work. In addition to that “risks are exacerbated by the fact that most Latino dairy workers have limited or no English language skills, making it difficult to train on potentially dangerous tasks or to communicate about risks” (Green Mountain Care, 2013). As our experience visiting farms for ESL tutoring and for on-site mediation has shown us, housing adds to the potential health risks of workers. Houses are usually located on farm property, which means air quality is often poor because of exposure to cleaning agents, animals and manure. Frequent health problems include neck/back pain, exacerbated allergies, followed by dental and mental health issues —among which depression is the most common (Chappelle & Baker, 2012). Moreover, the reach that health care services such as those offered by the Bennington Free Clinic for people who lack health insurance —among them migrant

workers— is limited as well. The clinic’s sphere of influence does not include areas outside of Bennington County, let alone towns in New York. However, due to the increased demand from Latinos living in Washington County (and other counties near Bennington) staff members have seen themselves in a position where they are unable to deny healthcare to individuals who cannot find it closer to where they live.

Mental health issues have been associated with the constant fear of deportation and isolation. Isolation has been one of the major issues which we have been concerned with since we started our organization. Only going to the farms for a couple of hours and experiencing the feeling of being “in the middle of nowhere” can give one a sense of what isolation means in this situation. Most of us have gone to farms for weekly ESL lessons or to talk with migrant workers. Those moments have made us aware of the marginalization of Latino workers and the need they have to interact with others who speak their language, are more or less their same age, and do not work in dairy farms. With each tutee, at some point we realized that what they were most excited about when we came to the farm once a week was not the English lesson itself, but the social interaction and distraction from work which we could provide. Friendship, a listening ear and the ability to chat in Spanish were all invaluable tools. This has confirmed our belief in community-building as the main form of action we can take with the resources we have as students, in order to have a larger impact on the lives of Latino migrant workers in our community.

MIGRANT EDUCATION: THE NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION MODEL

As volunteers for the Vermont Migrant Education Program (VMEP), education has always been present in our discussions regarding how to adapt our teaching strategies to the needs of Latino migrant workers. The SOSOY Program (Strategies, Opportunities & Services for Out-of-School Youth) offers a large number of educational resources and services for migrant out-of-school youth. Its goal is to institutionalize its

services into State plans to increase the amount of resources available for this underserved population. Brendan O’Neill’s educational booklet: *Problem-Posing ESL for Migrant Farm Workers in Vermont*, gave us important insight into the interconnectedness of Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy and ESL lessons for Latino farmworkers. The pedagogical model that prominent Brazilian educational philosopher, Paulo Freire, proposes in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is based on the premise that “marginalized and otherwise silenced populations hold important and potentially transformative knowledge and experiences that are not valued enough or explored enough in traditional societal institutions” (O’Neill, 2009). He argues that the reason why this happens is because that knowledge leads to a deeper understanding of how power structures and systems of oppression —such as capitalism— work through the eyes of those whom the system oppresses.

In our own experience as volunteer ESL teachers for the VMEP and Spanish interpreters for the BFC, we’ve realized that the needs of farmworkers are often not fully met by the programs serving them within their state or in neighboring states. For instance, a barrier to accessing educational opportunities is geographical location. As noted by the VMEP staff, the New York Migrant Education Program (NMEP) has experienced difficulties recruiting people who live near the border between New York and Vermont, meaning that this area has remained disenfranchised from the rest of the state and has had to look for services elsewhere —namely, in Southern Vermont. Another barrier relates to the eligibility criteria of these programs. For instance, the VMEP eligibility criteria do not permit enrolling workers who are older than 22 and do not live in Vermont, have lived in the same place for over 36 months or hold a high school diploma. That already excludes workers who live closer to Vermont than to other towns in New York and who constitute the majority of the Latino patients at the BFC. In addition to that, the tutor certification procedure with the VMEP has been particularly inefficient since Fall 2014, requiring fingerprinting, multiple cultural sensitivity trainings, and supervised farm placements, keeping students from beginning to teach early in the academic term or even at all. The distance between the offices of VMEP, located in

Burlington—a good three hours away from Bennington—and the College add to the challenges of scheduling and volunteer coordination.

Despite the assistance that service providers like the BFC and VMEP give to a number of workers in the area, we have noticed that pervasive vertical power relationships of “teacher-student”, “interpreter-patient” and “doctor-patient” heighten cultural and language barriers. This tends to encourage a number of misperceptions, miscommunications, reductionist and otherizing views about Latinos (reinforced by their immigration status), and a social divide that seems to marginalize them to the point of erasure of their individual stories. In consequence and following Paulo Freire’s belief that education should always be transformative in a practical sense, this Spring, GANAS has started to think about developing an alternative and horizontal teaching model—similar to the College’s—that places students at the center of the educational experience. Developing this method involves gaining a deeper understanding of the various needs of migrant workers and the combination of academic knowledge with creative processes. We hope to be able to combine art and ESL teaching within our lessons (e.g. making handcrafts, playing an instrument, cooking, drawing) as has been accomplished with some of our projects this term.

COMMUNITY, SENSE OF PLACE AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

Sociological and anthropological research of transnational migration have expanded our understanding of migration as a phenomenon that takes place in global spaces and in the imagination of those who live between two or more cultures simultaneously. By reading about the experience of undocumented groups of Latinos from different socioeconomic backgrounds and in different locations, we have broadened our understanding of what it takes for a migrant to call a place his or her “home”. Similarly, we have reflected on how we—as people who have a very similar cultural background and/or who speak a version of Spanish that resembles theirs—can

be helpful in promoting a sense of place for workers. Authors like Cristóbal Mendoza explore the construction or permanence of transnational ties between Mexico and the United States through migration, focusing on the immigrant's sense of place. In his research paper *Transnational Spaces Through Local Places*, Mendoza explains that the process of place-making —as an immigrant social construct— plays an important role in facilitating transnational ties. He points out that “transmigrants” are those who “develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Mendoza, 2006).

Authors like him, Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, and Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz highlight the idea of “home as social relations.” Based on first-hand accounts of immigrants (mostly from Mexico) these authors conclude that in the process of constructing a “feeling of home”, migrants have benefitted from establishing community ties with those who share a similar culture with them. In the case of Vermont (specifically Southwestern Vermont) this turns out to be a challenge, since the population from this area is predominantly white and Latinos constitute a minority who is largely unseen in public spaces. We have heard from migrant workers themselves that the sense of community here in Bennington and the surrounding areas is notoriously different from other places in the country where they have worked previously. Such places, many have told us, concentrate a high number of Latinos who work in different capacities and interact more frequently than those who live in Southwestern Vermont. We have seen the example of Middlebury, in Addison County, where a bill was passed to allow undocumented workers to get driver's privilege cards, which allows them to move around relatively freely. However, they still have to worry about racial profiling and deportation.

Certain industries such as construction, where weekends are typically free, also allow for more recreation. One of our contacts described his experience in the South, where he was able to play soccer on the weekends of spend his evenings playing guitar. In contrast, the nature of dairy work necessitates a split-shift —cows have to be

milked twice a day— often making it impossible to sleep for eight hours in a row and eliminating any free or recreational time from workers' schedules.

GANAS students have noticed and experienced the lack of a Latino community outside and inside Bennington College. When initially coming here, some students have commented on the idea of feeling “out of place” by not being able to practice their cultural traditions with others or by not encountering people from their same cultural background. Outside of campus, in Bennington town, the majority of pedestrians, drivers, service providers and business owners are predominantly white. There are only a few Latino business owners who we have met, but they do not seem to identify with a Latino identity, nor do they seem active in any Latino community. In addition to that, we have noticed that the lack of public spaces or opportunities in which community ties can be forged (e.g. churches that offer Mass in Spanish, restaurants that serve Latin American food, places where people who speak Spanish can gather) can also be a factor that contributes to this sense of being “out of place” and perhaps be connected to migrant workers’--and Latino students’--feelings of isolation.

We have heard from many migrant workers that they often feel like they live far away from other Latinos and that they are not even sure if there are more Latinos near where they live. This keeps them from feeling like they belong to a larger community than that of the few Latino workers who labor on the farm as them. There also are not enough opportunities for them to gather as a group, since each one has a different “resting day” (the one day they get off throughout the entire week). The notion of only being here temporarily is another factor that might contribute to feeling isolated and out of place. After having conversations with some migrant workers and visiting some of their homes, we concluded that most workers we have met have plans to return to their home country, however, they do not know when that will happen. It seems to us that they feel tied to their work in the United States since a web of family members depend on them for financial support. Furthermore, they also have ambitions and long term goals to fulfill (e.g. building a house in their country) that can contribute to their decision

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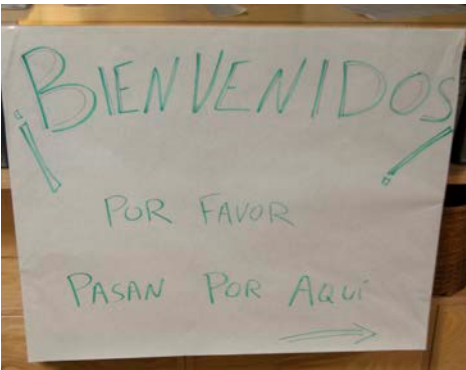
to stay for what can initially seem like a short period of time, but which can extend to many years after their arrival.

Thus, these aspects emphasize that migrant workers do not only experience a linguistic but also a social isolation. They also point to the need of promoting the creation of a community of support in which migrant workers feel able to practice their cultural traditions as well as interact with members of the local community of Bennington. This community would not only provide an important space for migrant workers to express themselves, but also for Bennington students who identify with Latin American culture and have been looking for opportunities to speak Spanish, practice their traditions and feel like they are in a place they can call “home”. Examples of community-based initiatives not far from Bennington (e.g. the partnership between Middlebury College and the Open Doors Clinic which we have visited) have shown us how beneficial it can be for students and migrant workers to have social interactions with one another. Therefore, our main goal—one that has always been present in our work— has been to form a community that brings together students, migrant workers and their families, and local service providers.

In an effort to begin building those ties, in Fall 2014 GANAS hosted a community dinner in town at the Universalist Unitarian Meeting House bringing together migrant workers and their families, GANAS students and volunteers, clinic staff and volunteers, and faculty from the College. In addition to that we have had smaller gatherings this term such as going out to eat or being invited to their houses for dinner; organizing an Easter brunch and going to Catholic Mass together; and sharing experiences while having informal conversations at workers’ houses. The following pages include a selection of pictures from some of these community gatherings:



GANAS members co-hosted Vermont Workers' Center's Candidates' Forum as well as presented testimony on the lack of accessibility to healthcare and transportation for undocumented Latino immigrants in Vermont.



Our first community gathering bringing together Latino immigrants and their families, students, Free Clinic staff, and faculty.



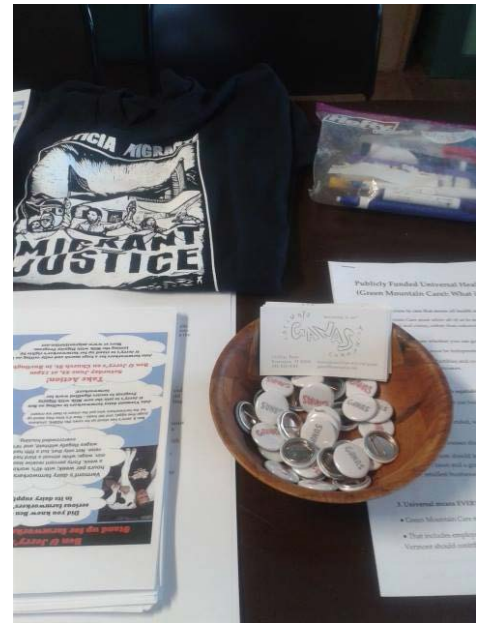
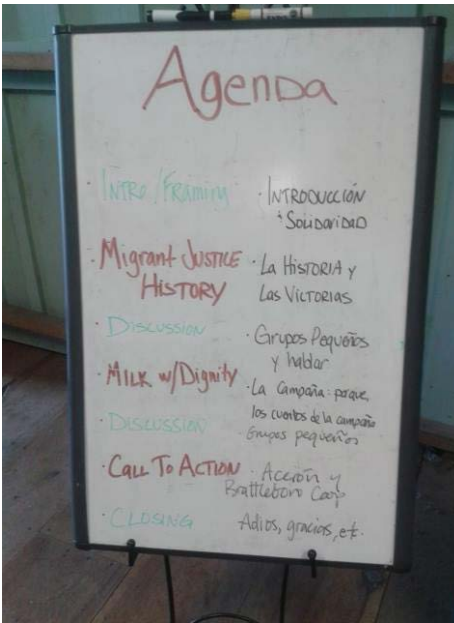
An evening of Ecuadorian cuisine, music and storytelling.



Potluck style post church gathering for Easter.



Interpreting at the Free Dental Day Event in downtown Bennington.



An afternoon of simultaneous English to Spanish interpretation, networking and group discussion at a Migrant Justice Community Forum hosted in Brattleboro.



A non-Spanish speaking GANAS volunteer using music as a common language while a knitting seminar simultaneously takes place.

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— CONCLUSION —

In conclusion, we want to emphasize that this booklet is primarily meant to be a resource, a jumping off point and a public action document for current and future members of GANAS. However, it can also be a document useful for anyone interested in working with or learning about Latino migrant workers across the country.

This project, initiative and group is not meant to be stagnant or fixed in its structure but rather reflect and be crafted around the current members' interests and passions. Similar to the Bennington Plan Process, our working philosophy is that each member be guided by self motivation and a constructive social purpose. In order to be successful in this work they must draw on all available resources and interdisciplinary skills in order to take on the complexity of this project. Adaptability and resourcefulness will also be required to address diverse and often unexpected points of engagement as they arise. It is important to bear in mind that we work with people in precarious and mobile situations. Deportation, sudden moves or unexpected drops in communication are not uncommon. Tolerance, patience and a willingness to be present and proactive to the needs of the moment are essential.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are interested in our expanded resources including our proposals for the future and the materials we've developed through the tutorial, please look up GANAS on Crossett Library's online digital archive, D-Space or on [Facebook](#). Available for your perusal, free of charge, with rights to unlimited distribution/use are the following elements:

- ❑ A podcast featuring diverse and rich experience of a few Latino migrant workers.
- ❑ A comparative study of student groups doing similar work to GANAS at other colleges and universities.

- ❑ A collection of data available for a potential assessment of the health status of this population near Bennington.
- ❑ A comprehensive reading list covering the different dimensions of migrant labor.
- ❑ Bilingual Financial Literacy workshop materials.

PLEASE NOTE:

Academic publications, research papers, educational resources and news articles related to our work are available on our google drive. Please email ganas@bennington.edu if you are interested in joining the group and/or getting access to these internal resources.



It is our sincere hope that the work of GANAS, whatever form it takes, will continue to honor the motivations for which this project is named.

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Our GANAS Volunteers who helped cook and set up for our community dinner, interpret at Free Dental Day, offer their skills as music teachers or lend us their vehicles so we could carry out our work.

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