



# TOWN OF VERNON

## Office of the Mayor

14 Park Place • Vernon, CT 06066

Tel: (860) 870-3600 • Fax: (860) 870-3580

[www.Vernon-CT.gov](http://www.Vernon-CT.gov)

**Daniel A. Champagne**  
*Mayor*

**Michael J. Purcaro**  
*Town Administrator*

**Dawn R. Maselek**  
*Assistant Town Administrator*

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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#### **Press Contact:**

David Owens, Communications Specialist

Desk (860) 870-3574

Cell (860) 494-5973

## **Town of Vernon Partners with Opportunity Works and Next STEP to use Nip Bottle Funds to Beautify Vernon**

**(VERNON, CT)** – The Town of Vernon is allocating money received from the surcharge on nip bottles of liquor to beautify Vernon. The Town Council unanimously approved Mayor Dan Champagne’s plan to use the money.

The Town received more than \$19,000 through the program and has contracted with Opportunity Works Connecticut, Inc., a non-profit that provides vocational and other training for people with disabilities, and the Vernon Public Schools Next STEP program, which provides students with disabilities with vocational training and helps them build positive relationships and independent living skills.

Teams from Opportunity Works and Next STEP begin working this week to clean up nip bottles and other refuse at several locations in Vernon, including downtown Rockville, parks and other public places. Cities and towns receive a nickel for each nip bottle sold by a package store in that municipality and state law requires it to be used to fund litter control or refuse reduction efforts.

“Using these funds to keep our community beautiful while at the same time providing work for Opportunity Works and Next STEP is a win for everyone,” Mayor Dan Champagne said.

Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said both organizations were obvious choices when town officials were determining how to initially use the nip bottle money.

“This is a great way to start using these nip bottle funds,” Purcaro said. “As additional funds become available we are prepared to expand our efforts.”

In the meantime, Purcaro urged people to dispose of nip bottles and other refuse properly.

“We take great pride in our beautiful parks and community,” Purcaro said. “We provide refuse containers and urge people to use them. As a reminder, littering on public property is against the law and carries a \$319 fine.”

The Opportunity Works team is looking forward to getting started, said Rene Lambert, the organization's Executive Director and Co-founder. "They are super excited and keep asking me 'when do we start, when do we start?'" One member of the team lives in Rockville and wants to help improve his community, she said.

Students from the Next STEP program will gain vocational skills while at the same time ensuring Vernon remains beautiful, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said.

"We require all students to do community service and this program is ideal for that," Dr. Macary said. "Our students are giving back to our town. They are part of the solution."

The cleanup teams will work in neighborhoods and parks, including Saxony Dog Park, West Main Street Playground, Talcott Park, Fox Hill Tower, Gene Pitney Memorial Park, Scenic Overlook on Tower Road and Central Park.

The Opportunity Works team is experienced in collecting, sorting and cashing-in bottles and cans. Last year the team raised approximately \$8,000 doing that work, Lambert said. They visit several area campgrounds and businesses and also have a monthly redemption day when people drop off bottles and cans, she said.

"Everybody wants to make sure our town and environment is clean and beautiful," Lambert said. "This is a great way to achieve that goal. And we love working with the Town of Vernon."

### **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 wellbeing 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.

Designated 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](http://www.vernon-ct.gov).

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