

# The Community Fund for WOMEN & GIRLS

Winter 2022

a component fund of  The **COMMUNITY** Foundation for Greater New Haven

[fundforwomenandgirls.org](http://fundforwomenandgirls.org)



Photo: Linkz Media

Collaboration of Minority Women Professionals: One of nine organizations in the Girls of Color Mentoring Network.

## 2022: Setting Audacious Goals, Choosing to Lead

The Community Fund for Women & Girls was created when women in Greater New Haven chose to lead. They joined together, knowing that collectively their voices and their gifts could help change the lives of women and girls. Over nearly 30 years, the Fund has seen the change that happens when women – longtime activists and community leaders as well as girls and women just discovering their voices – gather together to try to solve problems. They talk and listen to one another. They dig in and get going.

In 2022, in the face of a faltering economy, glaring racial and gender inequities, a continuing pandemic and changes in laws on reproductive rights, that's what the Fund continued to do. After commissioning and co-funding a study in 2021 which found that unemployment claims by women surpassed those of men for the first time in state history, that just six percent of families of color could afford high-quality daycare, and that homelessness affected Black and Hispanic households headed by women disproportionately, the Fund worked to find new ways to upend those stark findings. It created the **2022 Pathways to Economic Success for Women** grants, making the largest collective award in its history – nearly \$200,000 – with grants to 11 Greater New Haven nonprofits. The Fund's advisory board had deep conversations with policy makers, nonprofit and community leaders, discussing the ways signature grants could be used to make larger, more systemic changes in racial and gender inequities.

The Fund also supports programs that build leaders among immigrant and refugee women. Participants in the fellowship program at **Havenly** (one of the Pathways grant recipients) created the **Sisters in Diaspora**, an organizing group in which women learn about work and housing rights and fight for fair and affordable housing.

From the Fund's inception, it has also seen the power of mentorship. In 2021, the Fund reached out to leaders of mentoring organizations that serve girls of color, and with nine of the organizations formed a collective. This year, they found that while there was a great deal of mentor support for girls in middle and high school, that really dropped off for women of color ages 18-25. The **Girls of Color Mentoring Network** is working to change that.

As changes in laws continued to unfold in the area of reproductive rights, the Fund gathered experts and most recently held an online conversation, **"Reproductive Rights: Access and Advocacy"** on the current state of reproductive rights in Connecticut and beyond.

What awes advisory board vice chair **Christine Kim** most about the Fund is the way those involved never stop asking how life could be made better and more equitable for women and girls. "It's very inspiring," she says. "To see that kind of deep thought on getting into the roots of the problems that women and girls face in our area – and seeking solutions to those problems."

# Advancing Women, Mentoring Girls

## Pathways to Economic Success and Mentoring Network Intersect



Taking bold steps: Front row, L-R: Yvonne Jones (D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. 2 Succeed); Randi McCray (RM Consulting); Samantha Williams (CMWP); Shirley Ellis-West (Urban Community Alliance). Top row, L-R: Latisha Douglas (CMWP); Miriam James (NCBW); Paula Irvin (New Haven Alumnae Chapter - Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.); and Adriana Rodriguez (SCOW) at a recent Girls of Color Mentoring Network meeting.

Each week, new and established entrepreneurs talk about their weekly, monthly and long-term goals at the **Collaboration of Minority Women Professionals'** (CMWP) Manifestation Monday meetings. Samantha (Sammi) Williams, co-founder and president, listens, then doesn't mince words. "I find myself saying, 'Now that's a cute little goal. But how about a scary, audacious goal?'"

Williams and CMWP co-founder and vice president Latisha Douglas urge the women to push their ideas and their businesses forward, to keep taking bold steps.

Williams owns the 628 Digital Design agency and Melanated Business Coaching. Douglas is a data scientist, small business automation expert and data analytics consultant. They founded CMWP as a membership-based organization where Black and Brown women with years of experience as entrepreneurs and business owners "support other women who are coming up behind them, so they can learn from their wins and their losses," she says. They grew the business **CMWP Foundation**, an entrepreneurial support organization (ESO) serving Black and minority men, women and children. As part of the Fund's **2022 Pathways to Economic Success** program, CMWP Foundation created **MAGNIFY by CMWP** to provide targeted support, resources and funding for Black women entrepreneurs. It

includes an onsite childcare component, **Kiddie KoWorking**, so mothers can readily take part.

They initially started the Collaboration because of the lack of representation in entrepreneurial circles and support organizations, Williams says. "Instead of begging for a seat at someone else's table, I'm going to build one on my own."

Athena Murphy, a West Haven-based entrepreneur, says CMWP was just the kind

## The Girls of Color Mentoring Network

CMWP Foundation

D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed, Inc.

Delta Foundation of Greater New Haven

Iota Chi Sigma Foundation

National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

New Haven Pearls of Excellence Foundation

Phenomenal I Am Inc.

Spanish Community of Wallingford

Urban Community Alliance

of program she needed. In 2019, she created a lip gloss business after being dissatisfied with the products available on the market. “I started experimenting with different formulas and colors,” she says. Her sister joined as co-owner, and they launched Liplock LLC, which sells vegan-based, cruelty-free lip glosses, liquid matte lipstick, as well as soy candles. In April, they rolled out the company website. “I was getting into the groove of running the business, but I didn’t have any direction, who to contact, or how to build relationships,” Murphy says.

She met Williams and Douglas at the Westville Performing Arts Center, owned by another CMWP member, Barbara (Babs) Alexander. Athena quickly decided to become a member, and from the moment she joined, she felt a positive and immediate impact.

“I’ve collaborated with other Black women, strong women who share their ideas, and everybody helps everybody,” Murphy says. “I go to networking events and talk to women, and they help me get my name in the room. I’ve met with banking representatives, and I’m also looking into grants to stretch my business’ footprint.”

She says the women in the program understand her realities – that she is raising her young daughter as a single parent and works full-time in telecommunications while building her own business. When she needs to bring her daughter to events, “it’s very welcoming,” she says, “and the women there understand how things are.”

“On Manifestation Mondays, we start with a conversation about what’s going on with your business. These discussions have given me accountability and helped me establish strategic goals,” Murphy says. “So many seasoned Black and Brown women are sharing their ideas, bringing their knowledge to us.”

“That is one of the main goals,” Williams adds. “We’ve created a financially stimulated, melanated ecosystem,” she says. “Our members are empowered not just to reach their dreams, but to exceed their dreams.”

CMWP works with professional women and entrepreneurs to build a supportive network. Recognizing the power of working together, CMWP also works with girls, and is part of the Fund’s **Girls of Color Mentoring Network**.

## Collective Power

In 2021, the Fund for Women & Girls hosted a series of focus groups for mentoring organizations. Nine organizations – including CMWP – created a collective, the **Girls of Color Mentoring Network**. The network comprised of long-established community-based groups and programs just getting started, all led by women of color. Some organizations provide a focus on college readiness, others on esteem building, and others on career or business development. At a Women & Girls Fund Advisory Board meeting earlier this year, network members discussed their progress, successes and challenges over this last year. They found that while there was a great deal of emphasis on mentoring for middle and high school students, there was a lack of it available to young women ages 18-25. They recognized how vital it is for women of color in that age group to have career support, leadership development opportunities and support navigating healthy relationships. Network members also addressed the challenge of keeping middle and high school-aged girls engaged in mentorship programs when there are so many things competing for their interest; when they lack transportation; or are struggling with mental health issues; are unable to afford to take part; or when their parents aren’t aware of available programs.

Together, they discussed solutions, including:

- Providing basic supports, including food and bus passes.
- Creating leadership development opportunities for older girls to mentor younger ones.
- Partnering with dance, sports and other organizations to get more girls involved in the mentorship programs.
- Developing a parent orientation program.
- Offering workshops on mental health to girls, young women and their families.

Williams and Douglas say they love being part of the Network. “We get to hear what other organizations are doing, how we can collectively meet the needs of girls and young women of color in the Greater New Haven community and make sure no one is overlooked,” Williams says. “Girls and young women of color need mentors who look like them and who have walked the same paths.”





Photo: Aziza Mohamed

Ana Hernandez (left) with Cohort 5 colleague Munira Mohamed at Havenly: "There's a love and unity here."

## Job Training, Education, Friendship and a Voice

Fellowship Program at Havenly one of 11 Greater New Haven Nonprofits to Receive 2022 Pathways to Economic Success Grant From the Community Fund for Women & Girls

Many things drew Ana Hernandez to the **Havenly Fellowship** program: She would be one of 15 women, immigrants and refugees from around the world, who would receive culinary training, and would help run the Havenly Cafe. She would earn money while working and as she learned, taking classes in English, digital and financial literacy. What she hadn't expected to discover was a sisterhood.

After two months of coursework, the fellows moved into the kitchen where Havenly's co-founder and co-executive director Nieda Abbas taught them recipes for Damascus bowls (spiced lentils and bulgur), falafel wraps, Istanbul street bites and baklava, all served at the cafe on Temple Street. As they chopped vegetables and rolled pastry dough, the women – who speak English, Spanish, Arabic or Farsi – grew to know and "care deeply about one another."

"This is so different from places where I've worked before," Hernandez says. "There's a love and unity here."

She recalls a morning in their English class when news broke about turmoil in Afghanistan. A classmate talked about her fears for her family there. They comforted her and began to share their own concerns about family members in countries far away.

"We were able to talk and cry together and support each other," she says.

Havenly also helped Hernandez to find her voice. "We have an organizing collective for alumni and current fellows called the **Sisters in Diaspora**," says Jane Dowd, Havenly's co-executive director for development. "They recently finished a year-long campaign for fair and affordable housing in New Haven. We do lessons on giving testimony. How do you tell someone what is needed – in your own voice? It's a very important skill not only for political or organizing campaigns but also in your everyday life."

Hernandez, who is originally from Mexico, came to understand her housing rights when she became part of Sisters in Diaspora. It led her to speak to her landlord about repairs that needed to be done. She was also inspired to join another collective of women who are working together to open a new food business and she plans to take more courses in English after she completes the fellowship.

This past year, Havenly was one of 11 local nonprofits that received funding from the **2022 Pathways to Economic Success for Women** grant program. Organizations were eligible for up to \$20,000 and the Fund awarded nearly \$200,000 in total, the largest

collective award in the Community Fund for Women & Girls' nearly 30-year history.

The grants were a rapid and direct response to a 2021 study commissioned and funded in part by the Fund. It found that unemployment claims by women surpassed those of men for the first time in state history; that just six percent of families of color can afford high-quality infant daycare or toddler programs; that homelessness affected Black and Hispanic households disproportionately; and that more Hispanic women reported food insecurity compared to women of other races and ethnicities.

From the very start, Dowd says the support from the Fund has allowed the Havenly Fellowship to truly take root and flourish. "It's been extremely important for us to be able to bring more women into the program," she says, noting that they began with two fellows, grew to four and now have 15 women per cohort. The continued support has allowed them to gather more data and information so that they can apply for federal funding.

This fall, the Havenly Fellowship received a \$1.8 million American Rescue Plan grant as part of CareerConneCT, a program of the state's Office of Workforce Strategy. The grant will fund the fellowships for the next three years and allow the Havenly team to seek support for new fellowship programs in other career areas.

The Havenly Fellowship was designed to be accessible to immigrant and refugee women.

"We offer interpretative and dictation services in each language of the women in each cohort," Dowd says, adding that even the fellows' WhatsApp chat is translated. The courses run from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. because most of the women are mothers of school-aged children.

"Our fellows are a group of people who have been marginalized in our country," Dowd says. "They are immigrants, documented and undocumented. They're women. They are working on their English language skills. They are mothers. The way the system is set up now, it's nearly impossible for them to find and keep a good job." But after finishing the fellowship, participants have gone on to study nursing and to pursue other job training and their GEDs.

"I'm so proud of all of the women," says Abbas, who came to the U.S. from Iraq where she owned three restaurants. Here she could initially only find work in a cigarette rolling factory. She wanted immigrant women to have more choices and co-founded Havenly in 2018. "When many of the fellows come to the program, they have no job," she says. "After six months in the program, they are so strong. They have self-confidence."

Program alumni have opened their own catering businesses and a food truck on the Yale campus; they work in hospitals, universities, and daycare centers — and they have become leaders in their communities, Dowd says.

## Nearly \$200,000 Awarded in Support of Economic Security for Women

In June, the **Community Fund for Women & Girls** made the largest collective award in its history, nearly \$200,000, to 11 Greater New Haven nonprofits. The **Pathways to Economic Success for Women** grants addressed workforce training, employment and entrepreneurship, and supported services such as childcare, transportation and stipends. "This is a time of extraordinary challenges," says Karen Peart, Fund chair. "The Fund is pleased to provide funding for these much-needed programs that offer pathways to making change."

*For the more info and updates on recent work at these organizations, see [cfnh.org/WGpathways22](https://cfnh.org/WGpathways22).*

- All Our Kin - \$20,000
- Boys and Girls Club of New Haven - \$20,000
- CitySeed Inc. - \$20,000
- Collab - \$15,000
- Collaboration of Minority Women Professionals - \$20,000
- Community Action Agency of New Haven - \$20,000
- Havenly - \$19,440
- Life Health and Wellness Center - \$15,000
- Spanish Community of Wallingford - \$20,000
- Urban Community Alliance - \$20,000
- Women & Family Life Center - \$10,000

# Advisory Board Spotlight: Christine Kim

There was a moment about a year and a half ago when Christine Kim felt she had to take a stand against the growing anti-Asian American hatred and violence in New Haven and across the country. She wasn't sure she could. "I was paralyzed with fear – emotionally, physically and mentally," she says. She thought about the women she served with on the Community Fund for Women & Girls' advisory board and the women who ran nonprofits that came to share their stories and funding needs. When they saw a need or a problem facing women and girls in our community, they went toward it and worked to solve it.

She felt a "great sense of connection and a responsibility to our greater community to step up myself and represent." She founded **aapiNHV**, an Asian American Pacific Islander coalition. When she organized a rally covered by the news media, "a few hours later I was getting calls and so much support from the advisory board," she says. "The advisors are breakers of ceilings, barriers and walls, but they also are so dedicated to supporting future leaders," she says. "They don't rest on their laurels; they are always mentoring and supporting."

She became part of the Fund's advisory board in 2017 after her friend and former board chair Janna Wagner encouraged her. "It was my first foray into learning about local community philanthropy," Kim says. "Philanthropy is something that's very needed, especially as a way to support the many small nonprofits and groups that do the serious work of making change." Encouraging women to find their voice and urging the next generation to discover new, creative ways to work on the many issues that matter to women and girls, has always been part of the vision of the Fund, she says.

She is proud of the work that's been undertaken in this past year: the creation of the **Girls of Color Mentoring Network** and the ways the Fund remained resilient throughout the pandemic, "keeping this work going even though we were virtual ... keeping women and girls' issues at the forefront in our communities."

She also pointed to changes in the Fund's

grant structure. "We've had an amazing grants program, a great model." While she says that model has "plugged some of the holes in the dam, what the Fund is thinking about now is 'How do we prevent the flooding in the first place? Where is this all coming from?'" In response, Kim noted that the board has held in-depth conversations with legislators, policy makers and nonprofit leaders, discussing ways signature grants could be used to make large changes in childcare policies to support family leave and women's health.

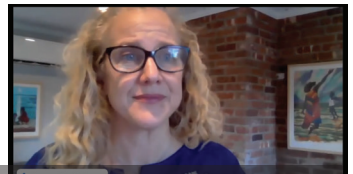
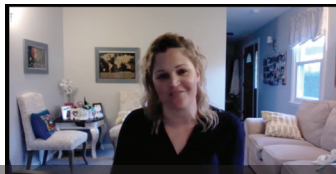


"Grantees are invited to speak, to tell their story. That's the most powerful thing," Kim says. "The Fund is not top-down, prescriptive. The kind of deep thought it seeks – getting into the roots of the problems and also the solutions to the challenges that women and girls face in our area – is very inspiring."

Kim lives in New Haven with her husband and two children, a city she loves and one she first called home as an undergraduate at Yale University. She left to work in environmental policy in Asia and returned several years later and immediately began volunteering in issues she cared deeply about, including social justice, food justice and food sustainability issues. Today Kim chairs the **CitySeed** board and is a member of the **Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group**.

As she begins her third and final term on the board (having served as vice president for the last two years), she is excited about the influx of ideas that new members will bring to the board. And as the Fund moves towards its 30th year in 2024, Kim notes with excitement that there's much work to be done. "We're very motivated by what's going on in the national landscape, the 2024 election, the impact of the pandemic, which is still overwhelmingly affecting women and children, and the economy," she says.

She hopes her work with the Fund will show her children "what women and girls can do" and that it might also let them see "what the world should look like," Kim says. "We always have to have hope. Having hope is being part of a community, listening to that community, showing up for that community and supporting it."



(L-R): Panelists Karen DuBois-Walton, Sally Grossman and Amanda Skinner in an online conversation Nov. 2.

# Reproductive Rights: Access and Advocacy

## An Online Conversation on the State of Reproductive Rights in Connecticut and Beyond

On November 2, the Community Fund for Women & Girls held an online conversation on the state of reproductive rights in Connecticut and beyond with panelists **Karen DuBois-Walton** (board member, **Planned Parenthood Votes!**), **Sally Grossman** (Advocate) and Amanda Skinner (President & CEO, **Planned Parenthood of Southern New England**), moderated by **Christine Kim** (vice chair, the Fund for Women & Girls).

It was an emphatic call to action in a year when so much has changed. During this time of limits on reproductive freedom, one of the most powerful things women can do is to tell their own abortion stories, the panelists said. And abortion stories were heard.

Grossman, an advocate who escorts patients into clinics, said having the choice to have an abortion “allowed me to create a business, allowed me to work, and allowed me to raise a family.” She said she worries about her five-year-old daughter and whether she will one day have those options. “We are in the circumstances we are in right now because we’ve allowed abortion to be

shamed and stigmatized,” said Skinner. “This gives the impression to opponents that they can carve away at access to it ... or that it is up for negotiation or debate. Our ability to control our bodies, to make decisions for our families and futures and for ourselves should not be up for debate. We should be talking about abortion, making it very clear that this is health care.”

In 2021, state-level abortion restrictions cost state economies about \$105 billion annually due to reduced earnings, an impact on labor-force participation, increased job turnover, and time off for women of childbearing age.

THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH

She added that nearly one in four women in the United States has had an abortion. “To borrow the words of Renee Bracey Sherman, ‘everybody loves someone who’s had an abortion.’ It’s not something that should live in the shadows.”

The panelists urged the audience to support candidates who support reproductive rights and access for all women. Beyond the election, they also urged women to remain vigilant and get involved in organizations that stand for reproductive justice.

Watch a recording of the conversation and read the full recap, including a list of resources, at [cfgnh.org/ReproductiveRights2022](https://cfgnh.org/ReproductiveRights2022).

## Considering a gift to The Fund? THANK YOU!

The Community Fund for Women & Girls is Greater New Haven’s only endowment promoting the social and economic advancement of women and girls. We can do what we do because of the continued support from our community.

To gift retirement assets or appreciated securities or if you would like to create your own individually named fund, please contact Sharon at 203-777-7071. To make a credit card donation, please scan the QR code or visit [fundforwomenandgirls.org](https://fundforwomenandgirls.org). Checks are gratefully accepted using the enclosed envelope.





The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven  
70 Audubon Street New Haven, CT 06510

FPO  
Group C Inc  
514 Chapel Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

## Inside ...

2022 Pathways to Economic Success  
Grants; Girls of Color Mentoring Network;  
Reproductive Rights: Access & Advocacy;  
Advisory Spotlight: Christine Kim + more ...



follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/CommunityFundForWomenAndGirls](https://facebook.com/CommunityFundForWomenAndGirls)



follow us on Twitter @[fund4womensgirls](https://twitter.com/fund4womensgirls)

### Advisory Board Members

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Karen Peart<br><i>Chair</i>                                    | Barbara Chesler       |
| Christine Kim<br><i>Vice Chair</i>                             | Mary Beth Congdon     |
| Meredith Gavrin<br><i>Treasurer</i>                            | Barbara Ellinghaus    |
| Janna Wagner<br><i>Immediate Past Chair</i>                    | Anne Godsey           |
| Roxanne Coady<br><i>Community Foundation<br/>Board Liaison</i> | Miriam James          |
| Nilda Aponte   | Amy Marx              |
| Keisha Blake   | Maribel Lopez         |
|  | Liza Petra            |
|  | Carol Ross            |
|  | Tressa Spears Jackson |
|  | Cynthia Watson        |