

CONNECTIONS



The quarterly newsletter of
The **COMMUNITY** Foundation for Greater New Haven

OPPORTUNITY + EQUITY

One Year In

A Reflection From President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton

November marked one year since I stepped into the role of President and CEO. Anniversaries invite reflection — and this one arrives at a moment when our community, our nation and our democracy face profound challenges. Yet as I look back on this first year, what rises to the top is gratitude: gratitude for this community, for its resilience, for the generations of leaders and neighbors who built the deep legacy I was fortunate to inherit, and for the privilege of doing this work alongside so many dedicated partners. Over this past year, we have refined and affirmed a new strategic framework that reflects who we are and what this moment demands. Our work centers on healing together, learning together and acting together — because community is not something we simply describe; it is something we build, renew and protect.



Karen DuBois-Walton welcomed attendees to the Community Fund for Women & Girls 30th Anniversary event this November.



Photo Courtesy Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen

Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen serves an increasing number of community members seeking assistance with life's basic daily essentials.

Grants for Basic Needs Top \$2M in 2025

Funding Targets Food Access as Federal Cuts Loom

Among the recent federal cuts to the social safety net, changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, put as many as 58,000 Connecticut families at risk of losing aid for food, according to DataHaven. “Anytime we see a loss in benefits, whether it’s health care coverage, unemployment, social security or SNAP, people are forced into making difficult decisions — and all of that means we’re going to see an increase in all of our services,” says Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen Executive Director Steve Werlin. In response to the growing need, The Foundation’s Basic Needs Fund recently awarded \$425,000 to 44 local nonprofits serving residents who need basic daily essentials to survive. The grants are part of \$2 million in total grant funding from The Foundation for basic needs in 2025. Learn more about the Basic Needs Fund at basicneedsfund.org.

New Haven Healthy Start Ramps Up Efforts in Response to Growing Needs

Since October, New Haven Healthy Start (NHHS) has ramped up efforts to meet the needs of the hundreds of local families it serves. This often has meant providing essential supplies or food vouchers to help new and expecting parents with household costs during this critical — and confusing — time. Director Natasha Ray and Fatherhood Coordinator Rodney Moore say in addition to distributing supplies to clients, they also field daily calls and questions about changes to eligibility rules for benefits.



More than 300 community partners, donors and friends gathered to celebrate the Community Fund for Women & Girls' 30-year anniversary in November, featuring keynote speaker Vanessa Priya Daniel (center).

Photo Judy Sirota Rosenthal

30 Years of “Vision in Action”

300+ Gather to Celebrate Community Fund for Women & Girls

In November, the Community Fund for Women & Girls held its 30th Anniversary “Vision in Action” Celebration and Luncheon at the Omni Hotel in New Haven. More than 300 community partners, donors and friends gathered to mark the milestone and to hear an electrifying keynote from Vanessa Priya Daniel, organizer, movement builder and author of “Unrig the Game: What Women of Color Can Teach Everyone About Winning.” The event was the culmination of a year-long calendar of celebrations, workshops and accomplishments, from a kickoff event in April that united the Fund’s earliest founders with newcomers and community stakeholders, to the annual Pathways to Economic Security for Women grants program, which this year awarded \$130,000 to 12 trailblazing organizations serving women and girls in Greater New Haven. Read more about the year’s events and support the Fund at ManyVoicesOneVision.org.

She Leads Justice Awarded 30th Anniversary Signature Grant

She Leads Justice (SLJ) was awarded the Community Fund for Women & Girls 30th Anniversary Signature Grant of \$100,000. The two-year grant will support the Fund’s commitment to systems change for the social and economic advancement of women and girls in Greater New Haven. It will also support the expansion of SLJ’s Pathways to Economic Autonomy program, resulting in a 10 percent increase in legal services and referrals for 300+ women in Greater New Haven. The grant will also bolster SLJ’s influential efforts around community organizing, civic engagement and policy reform.



Photo Courtesy of The Shore Line Trolley Museum

The Shore Line Trolley Museum in East Haven is among the 162 local nonprofits with an Organization Fund at The Community Foundation.

Organization Funds at The Foundation Top \$162M

Service Provides Sustainability for Nonprofits

For over 30 years, The Community Foundation has offered nonprofit organizations and other charitable entities the opportunity to invest their own assets right alongside The Foundation's endowment. The service provides nonprofits with cost effective access to world-class investment management, allowing them to focus on their mission while ensuring long-term stability through prudent management of their assets. Organization fund assets entrusted to The Foundation are revocable, meaning they can be returned to the organization at their discretion. The Community Foundation has operated as a Registered Investment Adviser since 2014, adhering to the highest industry standards as a regulated entity by the Connecticut Department of Banking. The Foundation manages 162 organization funds with a combined value of \$162 million as of December 2025.

Mission Investments Company Launches Innovation Growth Fund

The Mission Investments Company (MIC), a subsidiary of The Community Foundation, is expanding its entrepreneurship strategy with the launch of the MIC Innovation Growth Fund. The \$20M vehicle promotes inclusive wealth creation and economic opportunity by advancing access to growth capital. The Fund empowers founders of all backgrounds, and has a strong emphasis on founders underrepresented in traditional capital markets, particularly women and entrepreneurs of color. Since its inception in 2017, the MIC has committed more than \$60M in mission-aligned investments spanning affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization and business incubation. Learn more at micfunds.org.



Bitsie Clark, with Fund founders Maryann Ott, Robin Golden, Mimsie Coleman, Betty Monz and Barbara Lamb.

Photo Judy Sirota Rosenthal

Remembering Frances “Bitsie” Clark

Champion of Local Artists and Community

Bitsie Clark was a powerhouse. She served as executive director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven for nearly two decades. She is credited with being one of the founders of the Audubon Arts District, and a driving force in establishing the arts as an important economic industry in the region. She also gave continuous advice and support to the region’s artists. Though Clark passed away on October 10, 2025, her legacy was honored in her lifetime by friends Maryann Ott, Robin Golden, Mimsie Coleman, Betty Monz and Barbara Lamb, who established The Bitsie Clark Fund for Artists at The Foundation in 2017. The Fund continues Clark’s commitment to artists in Greater New Haven, where there is an abundance of artistic talent but few sources of financial support. In partnership with nonprofit arts organizations, the Fund offers grants for individual artists, allowing them to pursue significant goals that might otherwise be out of reach.

Quinnipiac River Fund Supports Research, Cleanup, Community-Building

More than 10 years ago as an associate professor at Quinnipiac University, Courtney McGinnis was part of a team of environmental sleuths looking for the source of phenothiazine and the possible presence of phthalates (toxic effluents used in making plastics) in the Quinnipiac River. Today, as an interim dean and a professor of biology and medical sciences, McGinnis leads the team, gathering data on the health of the waters and overseeing cleanup efforts. Her ongoing successes are made possible through support from the Quinnipiac River Fund at The Community Foundation. The Fund’s 2026 grant application process is open through February 2. Learn more at thequinnipiacriver.com.



John Padilla (who served on the board from 1994 to 2000) and Andy Eder (on the current board) joined fellow Community Foundation board members past and present for the Emeritus Circle launch event in November.

Photo Judy Sirota Rosenthal

Emeritus Circle Engages Board, Past and Present

Three Decades of Leaders Join Together

Board members from the past three decades reconnected with each other at The Foundation's launch of its new Emeritus Circle. The Emeritus Circle honors the lasting contributions of past board leaders while activating their wisdom and continued commitment to justice and community impact. The initiative is designed to engage the group as trusted advisors, community ambassadors and philanthropic champions. President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton and Senior Vice President of Development Walter Woods hosted the launch event at Zinc in New Haven. "It was invigorating to share in the histories and contributions of Board members past and present and to unite in our support of the vision and leadership of this institution and the communities it serves," said Khalilah Brown-Dean, former board chair.

Valley Community Foundation Underscores Importance of Aging in Place

In November, the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) hosted a learning session on Aging in Place in the Valley. The panel discussion featured local leaders and public health experts who addressed the challenges, barriers and opportunities facing this growing group, representing 20% of the Valley's 140,000 residents. VCF President and CEO Sharon Closius emphasized the importance of allowing local seniors to stay in their homes. "Aging in place means so much more than just staying at home," added Mary McNelis, Seymour's Director of Community Services. "It's about having a purpose, health and wellness support and social conversation."



On October 27, The Foundation joined with Connecticut Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas to celebrate National Civics Day.

Photo Katie Pellico

The Foundation Prioritizes Civic Health

Supports Civic Participation, Education, Resident Leadership

Strengthening the civic health of Greater New Haven is central to The Foundation's strategy to advance opportunity and equity. "Philanthropy is strongest when it strengthens the civic fabric of a community, connecting people to one another, building understanding and empowering residents to shape the future of the place they call home," says President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton. The Foundation's funding for civic health includes grants for local journalism, social health data research, civics education and cultural activities. As a convenor, The Foundation is deepening its commitment to bring people together to become engaged, learn and take action. Learn more about the Civic Engagement and Awareness Fund, created to ensure the long-term support of civic health at cfgnh.org/CivicFund.

Briefings Invite Dialogue, Understanding and Action

The latest in a yearlong series of virtual briefings on federal actions and their impacts were held on immigration and health care. In October, The Foundation hosted the resettlement agency IRIS and CT Students for a Dream for a briefing about changes to the legal pathways to citizenship and the resulting fear rippling through immigrant communities. A November briefing on health care with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Yale New Haven Health and New Haven Healthy Start detailed federal changes to health care funding and the risks posed to local communities.

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Laptops for Gateway
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Youth basketball at the
Boys & Girls Club.



A new van for the Milford
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For more information, please call Sharon
at 203-777-7071 or visit cfgnh.org/daf.

What do these have in common?

Each of these community programs was supported by a local donor through their donor advised fund (DAF) at The Community Foundation, the area's charitable resource for almost 100 years. If you too want to give with impact, locally or beyond, we can help!