

CONNECTIONS

The newsletter of



The **COMMUNITY** Foundation for Greater New Haven

OPPORTUNITY + EQUITY

Foundation Awards \$3 Million to Local Nonprofits

The Community Foundation has awarded more than \$3M in unrestricted multi-year grants to 158 local nonprofit organizations. The funding comes at a time when many organizations face rising demand, federal funding reductions and growing financial uncertainty. “These flexible operating grants give organizations the stability they need to respond to emerging challenges while continuing to serve our communities where they are needed most,” says President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton. Announced in July, the funding recommendations prioritized the Foundation’s strategic impact areas and such timely issues as civic health, immigrant communities, climate change, community organizing, women’s reproductive rights, legal services, economic mobility, mental health and health equity. View the full list of grantees at cfgnh.org/2026grants.



Volunteers receive a bulk food delivery for the pantry at Loaves & Fishes New Haven, one of the 158 local nonprofits to receive a multi-year responsive grant from The Community Foundation.



Photo: Judy Sirota Rosenthal

Community members came together at the Shubert Theatre for an inspiring evening of poetry, music, conversation and connection at the Foundation's Annual Meeting.

Community Healing Through the Arts

Music, Poetry, Connection at Foundation's Annual Meeting

On May 12, the Greater New Haven community came together for The Community Foundation's 2026 Annual Meeting at New Haven's historic Shubert Theatre for an evening of poetry, music and inspiring conversation. The program began with a performance by New Haven musician Paul Bryant Hudson. Foundation President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton's remarks moved from the accomplishments of 2025 to the work ahead of creating more opportunity and equity, and highlighted the Foundation's new strategic framework. DuBois-Walton then welcomed to the stage featured artist Reginald Dwayne Betts for storytelling, poetry and a conversation that centered on community healing through the arts. Copies of the Foundation's 2025/26 Report to Our Community, featuring stories of community impact and local donors, were distributed to attendees. View the digital flipbook or request a printed copy at cfgnh.org/2026AnnualMeeting.

Continued Funding for Landmark Programs Supports Educational, Economic Success

The Foundation's Board of Directors approved new multi-year grants for New Haven Promise and ConnCAT, two impactful programs it has funded from the start. Promise will receive a five-year, \$750K grant and ConnCAT will receive a three-year, \$225K grant. Both programs advance the Foundation's strategy of promoting economic mobility and next generation leadership. Promise has awarded approximately \$43M in scholarships to 3,253 local students, and connects them to internships and careers. ConnCAT prepares youth and adults for educational and career advancement through job training and youth programs. This June, it celebrated the opening of its new mixed-use hub at ConnCAT Place.



"It's a beautiful thing to see the way that women show up for women, and I don't just mean as individuals, but as a cause, as a movement," says Maggie Moffett, advisory board chair for the Fund for Women & Girls.

Many Voices, Shared Impact

Grantee Stories Inspire at Fund for Women & Girls Gathering

In July, supporters and partners of The Foundation's Community Fund for Women & Girls gathered for an evening of connection and celebration of local work advancing their shared mission. "I've seen firsthand how investments in women cause a ripple effect that extends far beyond the one individual," said Foundation President & CEO Karen DuBois-Walton as she introduced attendees to organizations serving women and girls in Greater New Haven. Kaisha Luciano, who was once unhoused and is now pursuing a law degree at Quinnipiac University, shared her transformative experience with the nonprofit Dress for Success, a grantee of the Fund. "I know how pivotal something like this can be for the first-generation student who just needs a bit of encouragement with the outfit to match. When you look good, you feel good and you do good. I still wear my suit to this day," Luciano said. The Fund has invested in opportunities for local women and girls since 1995. Learn more at fundforwomenandgirls.org.

Pathways Grants Awarded to 15 Organizations, Supporting 1,500 Women and Girls

In August, the Community Fund for Women & Girls awarded \$170,000 to 15 nonprofits that are helping women and girls succeed at home, in their careers and in their communities. This year's Pathways for Women and Girls grants will support more than 1,500 local women in the areas of financial and digital literacy; health and wellness; job training and coaching; and organizing, advocacy and leadership. "We're proud to invest in nonprofits that are helping create a Greater New Haven where women and girls are not limited by barriers, but empowered by opportunity," said the Fund's Advisory Board Chair Maggie Moffett.



Photo Yale School of Management/Ephraïm Nicolakis

Putting Capital to Work for Community Impact

Yale School of Management Alumni Explore Mission Investing

How can capital help create opportunity and build generational wealth in underserved communities? That question brought 49 Yale alumni and New Haven community leaders to The Community Foundation (TCF) in April for a conversation about mission-driven investing and community impact. Panelists Anna Blanding (Yale SOM, '09); chief investment officer at ConnCORP; A.F. Drew Alden, chief investment officer at TCF and president and CEO of TCF Mission Investments; and Demetris Giannoulas (Yale College, '94), CEO of Spring Bank in the Bronx, shared insights from their work in community development, investment and entrepreneurship. The discussion was moderated by Judy Chevalier, William S. Beinecke Professor of Finance and Economics at Yale SOM. The evening highlighted the power of capital and partnerships to expand access, create opportunities and build a more equitable economic future. "We are thinking more about impact and sustainability in our world ... and the future of this globe," said Alden.

Briefing Examines State of the Nonprofit Sector, Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

In August, leaders from The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and United Way of Greater New Haven (UWGNH) hosted a briefing on the state of the nonprofit sector in our region. UWGNH President and CEO Jennifer Heath, together with Foundation SVP of Planning & Community Strategies Christina Ciociola, discussed how nonprofits are facing three colliding crises: rising costs due to inflation; government funding cuts affecting both nonprofits and clients; and a resulting increased demand for services. This is especially true for nonprofits offering basic needs support, though losses and added strain are being reported across the sector both locally and nationally.



(L-R) Jocelyn Coleman Walton, Thelma Johnson and Al Johnson were part of The Vineyard Project in New Haven's storytelling program at the Strand Theatre in Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard.

Celebrating Black Joy, Story and Giving

The Vineyard Project Experience 2026

More than 100 friends and partners of The Community Foundation's Vineyard Project in New Haven ventured to historic Oak Bluffs in Martha's Vineyard this August to celebrate Black joy, the power of story and intergenerational giving. A storytelling program at the Strand Theatre featured New Haven Poet Laureate Yexandra Diaz; Lee and Loren Van Allen of the Shearer Cottage Family; Jocelyn Coleman Walton of The Cottagers; Al and Thelma Johnson; Dr. Jonathan Q. Berryman, founder, Heritage Music Fund; and 13-year-old TJ Relaford, who co-founded the Luminary Scholars Fund at the Foundation in 2024. "I wanted to help other children with dyslexia get access to the resources that can make a difference in their lives," said Relaford. "This is also why The Vineyard Project [in New Haven] means so much to me: it shows that giving is about caring for each other, sharing what we have, and making our community stronger."

Philanthropy as a Force for Black Health and Wellbeing

In recognition of Black Philanthropy Month this August, The Community Foundation joined three other Connecticut community foundations for a virtual conversation on philanthropy's power to strengthen Black communities and advance health and wellbeing. Public health leaders discussed the lasting effects of racial inequities in health care and the importance of building trust and increasing Black representation among health professionals. Throughout the conversation, panelists emphasized the transformative potential of Black philanthropy — and the importance of ensuring Black communities have a voice in directing resources and shaping solutions.



Photo: Katie Pellico

Leylianna Irizarry Malavet (left) plans to pursue pediatric oncology at the University of Connecticut with support from the Progreso Latino Fund Founders Scholarship.

2026 Fund Founders Scholars Announced

Two High School Students Receive Progreso Latino Fund Award

This fall, Leylianna Irizarry Malavet is attending the University of Connecticut with plans to pursue pediatric oncology. At a ceremony hosted by the New Haven Scholarship Fund in June, the Metropolitan Business Academy graduate was one of two local students to receive the Progreso Latino Fund (PLF) Fund Founders Scholarship of \$3,000. The Scholarship is administered through the New Haven Scholarship Fund, whose mission is to provide scholarships to eligible New Haven students who have the most financial need and academic potential. “I’ve always wanted to go to college, ever since I was a little girl,” said Malavet. “I’ve always wanted to go to the University of Connecticut, but obviously it’s very expensive, so just having extra aid helps.” Hillhouse High School graduate Syrena Torres was also awarded the Founders Scholarship this year. “It’s such an honor,” said Malavet, reflecting on the importance of having a Latine-focused fund. “Latino communities aren’t really represented, so just having this is great.”

Local Scholarships Help Send Greater New Haven Students to Higher Ed

Anthony Perez, a Metropolitan Business Academy graduate, is heading to the University of Connecticut (UConn) with support from the Deborah A. Highsmith Memorial Scholarship Fund at The Community Foundation. The fund was established in 1991 by Carlton Highsmith to honor his late wife and her commitment to students in New Haven Public Schools. The Fund is one of more than 75 endowed scholarship funds at the Foundation, most of which are administered through a partnership with the New Haven Scholarship Fund. “Specifically for me, [the scholarship] is so important because it gave me the actual access to go to UConn,” Perez said at the spring award ceremony.



Photo Courtesy of Susan Holahan

An outdoor enthusiast, Tom Holahan was committed to building a linear trail along the Mill River so people would be able to experience the natural beauty of green space running through the city's industrialized areas.

Fund Honors Tom Holahan, Mill River Trail

Supports Access to Natural Beauty and Green Space in the City

Tom Holahan was passionate about giving back to New Haven, the city he loved. His wife, Susan Holahan, recalls his declaration soon after they met: "There is only one city in the U.S. worth living in and that is New Haven." Among the many civic projects Holahan championed, building a linear trail along the Mill River was a life ambition. An outdoor enthusiast, he wanted people to experience the green space running through one of the city's most heavily industrialized areas. Susan is honoring Tom's memory and this mission with the Tom Holahan Fund for the Mill River Trail, which will support ongoing community engagement with the trail. The Fund, established by Susan in 2024, will provide a reliable and flexible income stream to sustain stewardship and engagement activities.

Multi-Year Grants Strengthen the Valley; Advance Wellbeing, Economic Opportunity

Eight nonprofit organizations working to improve the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities for residents of the Lower Naugatuck Valley are receiving a combined \$350,000 in multi-year grants from the Valley Community Foundation (VCF). The three-year commitments include grants to the Valley Council for Health and Human Services, Shelton Economic Development Corporation and Operation Fuel. "Our nonprofit partners continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience while responding to increasingly complex community needs," says VCF President & CEO Sharon Closius. "These grants give organizations the ability to think beyond the next fiscal year."



The **COMMUNITY** Foundation *for* Greater New Haven

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