

# The Community Fund for WOMEN & GIRLS

Winter 2024

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

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



Young participants made empowering bracelets during a self-advocacy workshop led by the Fund's Girls of Color Mentoring Network at the H.E.R. Summit. Read more about the event on page 4.

Courtesy of MENTOR\Robertson, Santiago

## There From the Start: All Our Kin Partnership Inspires Over Three Decades

When three-year-old Jeremy first walked into Luisa Barrionuevo's childcare center, he was non-verbal and still using a pacifier. Luisa had never worked with a child with autism before and felt as though there was a giant wall between them.

Fortunately, she connected with **All Our Kin** (AOK), a nonprofit which helps home-based childcare entrepreneurs build their businesses. The support was invaluable, giving her the tools and techniques needed to best help Jeremy. "You are not a babysitter, you are an educator," Luisa remembers the AOK team telling her. That positivity resonated with Luisa, and she was able to go back to her classroom with confidence.

The bedrock for economic stability for women has always been childcare. Since its founding in New Haven nearly three decades ago, AOK has partnered with the Community Fund for Women & Girls. The now national nonprofit provides support for those starting a home-based early childhood education program, covering every aspect of building a quality childcare business.

Jeremy's story is just one example of how effective a high-touch training model can be for educators and families. Luisa proudly reports that in less than a year, Jeremy gave up the pacifier and was ready to move on to a special education program.



New American Leaders

Fund Chair Christine Kim.

## Cheers to 30 Years! Celebrate With Us in 2025

This is such an exciting time for the Fund as we approach our 30th anniversary in 2025 and welcome Karen DuBois-Walton as President & CEO of The Community Foundation. One of the biggest evolutions for the Fund has been our focus on listening to a wide range of voices and perspectives from our community. This upcoming anniversary year, we are planning a series of events where we will come together to learn from each other as we celebrate the past and chart a bold new future. We look forward to seeing you and hearing your voices! — **Christine Kim, Chair**

# \$115K to Support Women's Economic Security

## Pathways Grants Support Entrepreneurship, Housing, Innovative Childcare



Co-founder Caterina Passoni (top left) with cohort 7 graduates and staff at Havenly, Inc., one of 10 organizations in the 2024 Pathways to Economic Security for Women grant awards.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Fund for Women & Girls, along with other Connecticut-based organizations, commissioned a report to quantify the impact of the pandemic on women and girls in our state. Released in 2021, the Essential Equity report showed that for the first time, unemployment claims were filed by more women than men, and that only six percent

of families of color could afford high-quality childcare.

The findings made clear that the childcare challenge and other stresses shouldered by working women were made worse by the pandemic. But these stresses were not new and the work to address them was already a focus of the Fund, which has invested in working women since its founding. This long-term work informed its latest grants program, Pathways to Economic Security for Women.

Pathways grants support workforce training, employment and entrepreneurship and invest in wraparound services such as childcare, transportation and housing. In 2024, Pathways grants totaling \$115,000 are funding 10 nonprofits working in these areas, supporting over 3,500 local women.

Since inception, the Fund has awarded over \$2 million in grant dollars; through its Pathways to Economic Security program, \$504,440 has been awarded to 18 organizations serving Greater New Haven.

**Havenly, Inc.**, a New Haven-based cafe and support organization for refugee women, is using its Pathways grant to add daycare for participants in its six-month commercial kitchen training program. The women also learn digital and financial literacy and receive career coaching. Havenly provides the women with a community of trust and dignity, along with a living wage.

## 2024 Pathways to Economic Security for Women Grant Awards

- **CERCLE - \$15,000**
- **Christian Community Action - \$10,000**
- **CitySeed Inc. - \$10,000**
- **CMWP Foundation, Inc. - \$10,000**
- **Community Action Agency of New Haven - \$10,000**
- **Havenly, Inc. - \$10,000**
- **Life Health & Wellness Center - \$10,000**
- **Manufacturing And Technical Community Hub - \$15,000**
- **Spanish Community of Wallingford - \$10,000**
- **Winning Ways, Inc. - \$15,000**



The pandemic created unique challenges for mothers in the Havenly program, as schools and daycares closed. For refugee women, it was already challenging to find affordable, culturally competent childcare. Caterina Passoni, one of Havenly's co-founders, knew it was time to consider adding childcare to the Havenly program.

"We brought 12 graduates of the Havenly fellowship together to try to imagine what a daycare could be," Passoni recalls. "Several of them had experience with daycare before coming to the United States, and their input was critical."

With the Pathways grant, Havenly is looking for a location that suits their needs and will allow the daycare program to grow. Havenly is working in partnership with fellow nonprofits All Our Kin and **Cercle** for help with designing the space, as well as licensing and training Havenly constituents as childcare providers. They are hoping to open the daycare program in the spring of 2025. The grant will cover the deposit once they find the space.

"The Pathways grant accelerated our shift from vision to action," says Passoni. "It came at the perfect time, and gave our community hope when hope was hard to come by."



Courtesy of Havenly, Inc.



The ARISE Center at Christian Community Action promotes the health and wellness of the entire family.

Courtesy of CCA

Another Pathways grant recipient, **Christian Community Action Inc. (CCA)**, is using the funds to provide direct financial assistance to the women it serves. The assistance is paying for classes (including online classes for GED and higher education), work clothes for women starting new jobs, childcare and other costs that present barriers to women's employment.

"Having the Pathways grant has accelerated our ability to provide these services and help more people," says Charmain Yun, executive director of CCA. "Before the Pathways grant, we had very limited funds to assist folks who wanted

to go back to school and we didn't have any funding to help with childcare expenses, which meant we were limited in our childcare referrals for any women who wasn't already employed."

When nonprofits expand their service offerings to help women and families solve multiple challenges in spaces centered on dignity, the outcomes for the families are stronger — with positive impacts that resonate throughout the whole community.

"It gave our community hope when hope was hard to come by."

CATERINA PASSONI,  
HAVENLY, INC.

# The Power of “WE”

## Girls of Color Mentoring Network Builds on Collaborative Programming

“I’ve been in back to back meetings all morning, but there was *no way* I was missing this!” said Chaka Felder-McEntire, founder and executive director of **Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Program** as guests gathered in the Arts Council’s sandbox community space this October.

The meeting she refused to miss was a brainstorming session on what the next phase of the Girls of Color Mentoring Network would and could look like. Over three hours, a dozen community leaders came together to identify ways to best impact the future for young women of color in Greater New Haven.

Created in 2022 by the Community Fund for Women & Girls, the Network fosters collaboration among mentoring programs as they each connect girls and young women of color with role models and mentors. Executive directors, staff and dedicated volunteers who work in or with mentoring organizations learn from each other, share best practices and strategize about how best to reach the girls they mentor.

What the Fund for Women & Girls has enabled among these groups goes far beyond funding. By coming together regularly and sharing ideas and programs with each other, these leaders have developed what The Foundation’s Director of Program & Evaluation Kara Straun

calls “collaborative programming” — joining together to serve more girls with more expansive offerings. Having a space to learn about what other organizations are providing to the population you also serve is invaluable.

Network members were also prominent at the H.E.R. (Healing, Empower, Resilience) Summit hosted by the Governor’s Prevention Partnership and the MENTOR Black and Brown Girls National Movement this August. The event brought together 38 mentoring programs serving girls age 12 to 17 from 21 communities across Connecticut.

“The need for strong mentors is a challenge, not only in Connecticut but across the country,” notes Network member Brittany Baines, associate director of mentoring grants and community engagement for the Governor’s Prevention Partnership (and founder and CEO of **Phenomenal I Am, Inc.**). “We are always looking for adults who are willing to devote their time and experience to a mentor relationship.”

Baines knew the impact of connecting the Connecticut chapter of the MENTOR Movement with the Network for the H.E.R. Summit would be powerful. The Network responded by bringing girls from their programs to the Summit, hosting a workshop showing the impact of mentorship and



Fund Advisory Board and Network member Paula Irvin (right), past president of the New Haven Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., leads a workshop at the STEM event.





Marvin Bowel Photography

(L-R) Network members Shirley Ellis-West, executive director of Urban Community Alliance and Yvonne Jones, founder and CEO of D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed, Inc. with mentees at the H.E.R. Summit.

importance of self-advocacy, talking about their unique programs with attendees, sharing resources, listening and learning about the experiences among all the groups.

Network member Adriana Rodriguez, executive director of **Spanish Community of Wallingford (SCOW)**, emphasizes the importance of listening before anything else. “We need to listen to our girls and our community, take that feedback, and then build those partnerships that are going to best meet their needs,” says Rodriguez.

Finding the best partners is a big part of what the Network does. In April of this year, Network members collaborated with CT STEM Academy to host the second Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) event at SCOW, especially critical since women, particularly women of color, remain overwhelmingly underrepresented in these fields. The young women had exercises in coding, robotics, rocketry and other STEM enrichment projects, and were introduced to inspiring women of color with careers in STEM who provided powerful role models.

“These girls are exposed to a dynamic environment of learning, seeing their own future potential, meeting extraordinary women,” notes Yvonne Jones, founder and CEO of Network member organization **D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed, Inc.**, reflecting on the event. “You can just see their confidence soar as the day progresses. And that happens only through the power of ‘WE!’”



Marvin Bowel

Network members: The power of “WE.”

## 2024 Girls of Color Mentoring Network

CMWP Foundation

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

National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

New Haven Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Phenomenal I Am, Inc.

Spanish Community of Wallingford

Theta Epsilon Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Urban Community Alliance

# Advisory Board Spotlight: Miriam James

## Agent for Change

"I just love to empower women and girls — to speak up, to get involved, to make a difference. No matter how big or small, I try to always make a positive change," says Miriam James, Fund for Women & Girls Advisory Board member.

James has always been an agent for change. When she first joined the Advisory Board for the Community Fund for Women & Girls, she was struck by the caliber of women on the board, and wasn't sure initially what she could possibly add to the mix. Having been raised in a family that prioritized service to others, James quickly found her footing.

"When all of us raise our voices in support of gender equity, it serves to amplify and raise the awareness that yes, this is something that is important for the future of our girls — and here's why it is important for you, too," she says.

As the third vice president for the **New Haven Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women** (NCBW), she's seen first hand how grants from the Fund for Women & Girls have changed the way middle and high school

girls see themselves and their capabilities. Through their STEAM program, the women of the NCBW coach and mentor girls to foster interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math — and just last year (2023) the New Haven Chapter had girls place first and second in a national competition.

"These young women didn't think they could do this, to get an award!" she recalls. "To see the increased confidence in these girls after that — it's wonderful!"

The New Haven Chapter of the NCBW is part of the Fund's Girls of Color Mentoring Network. Because of her roles in community organizations and with the Fund, James has valuable insights into how pooled resources strengthen communities.

"Seeing the transformation in mothers and children who are proud of themselves and their achievements — that is why I do this work," she says. "Knowing that your work, along with the work of so many others, has had a positive, lasting impact on the life of a mother and child is incredible."



## 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 to create your own individually named fund, please contact Erica G. Bradley at 203-974-1647 or Sharon Cappetta 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.





Karen DuBois-Walton with Will Ginsberg.

Judy Sirota Rosenthal

## The Foundation Welcomes Karen DuBois-Walton

New President & CEO Succeeds Will Ginsberg, Retired After Two Decades in the Role

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven welcomes Karen DuBois-Walton as its new president and chief executive officer. DuBois-Walton comes with a longstanding dedication to serving Greater New Haven as the former president of Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of New Haven.

"I am thrilled to be taking on this leadership role at The Community Foundation and for the opportunity to work with so many committed volunteers and donors like the incredible women who have built the Community Fund for Women & Girls over the past nearly 30 years," DuBois-Walton says. "My vision for the future is one where we work together to create a more equitable and inclusive Greater New Haven. The Fund's work on behalf of women and girls is completely aligned with The Community Foundation's vision, and I look forward to supporting the work during this upcoming 30th anniversary year and for many years to come."

DuBois-Walton succeeds Will Ginsberg, who retired on November 1, 2024.

"Karen is a great member of our community and a longtime inspirational community leader. She understands our community and she loves our community. The Foundation's board could not have made a better choice," says Ginsberg.

DuBois-Walton has a long history with the Community Fund for Women & Girls as a

community supporter and guest panelist at events hosted by the Fund. Last year, she was a panelist for "Disrupting Gender Inequity," which explored the economic inequities faced by women since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, she participated on the panel for the Fund's virtual event, "Reproductive Rights: Access and Advocacy."



DuBois-Walton on the Disrupting Gender Inequity panel in 2023.

Tony Spinelli for CT Public

"Knowing Karen's work in and commitment to Greater New Haven and the values we share, we are excited to welcome her in her new role," says Christine Kim, chair of the Fund's Advisory Board.

"She is a consummate advocate for inclusion and equity, and we look forward to collaborating with her on improving the lives of women and girls in Greater New Haven."



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