

# Legacy *Matters*



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New five-year strategic plan aims to enhance community engagement and "Valleyness."

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Great Give an astounding success once again. Valley nonprofits raise more than \$500,000 in just 36 hours.

## Upcoming Valley Events

**July 15-19**

**Learn to Row.**

**Free Lessons for kids ages 8-13.**

Canal Dock Boathouse, New Haven

8am-12pm Monday-Friday

Register at:

[www.CanalDock.Org/Derby](http://www.CanalDock.Org/Derby)

**July 26, 2024:**

**Downtown Sounds**

**Summer Concerts**

Live Music...Food Trucks...

Mobile Bar...Vendors

Veterans Memorial Park,

Shelton -- 5pm-10pm

[www.CelebrateShelton.Com](http://www.CelebrateShelton.Com)

**August 12, 2024:**

**John "Red" Larsen Golf Classic**

Race Brook Country Club, Orange

Register at:

[www.bgc-Inv.org/events](http://www.bgc-Inv.org/events)

**Sept. 6, 2024:**

**Echo Hose Ambulance**

**75th Anniversary Party**

Free family event featuring music

by the 80s rock cover band, Mullett

Shelton Riverwalk: 7pm-11pm

Rain Date: Sept. 7, 2024

For more information email:

[info@echohose.org](mailto:info@echohose.org)

## About the Valley Community Foundation

Established in 2004, the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) distributes approximately \$2 million in grants annually that support local nonprofits, causes, and students.

Along with discretionary grant-making, VCF manages more than 260 charitable funds to support Valley causes and organizations. VCF also works in close partnership with The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and receives funding from the Gates Fund and other preference funds that benefit the Valley.

For more information about VCF, or if you would like to donate or create a fund, call: **203-751-9162**, or visit: [ValleyFoundation.Org](http://ValleyFoundation.Org).

## Smart Investment

### Shaping the Future: VCF's Strategic Plan Embraces Valleyness and Building Community



*In February, Sharon Closius, VCF's President & CEO, joined Nancy Valentine, VCF's Board Chair in cutting the 20th Anniversary cake.*

**A**t the Valley Community Foundation (VCF), the energy of a new year saw the completion of significant projects, including the publication of a new Five-Year Strategic Plan, the release of the 2023 Annual Report, and several events celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

Each of these milestones not only reflects VCF's ongoing commitment to the Valley region but also underscores the evolving spirit of "Valleyness" that will guide its mission and work.

"This concept is pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support across our diverse communities," said Sharon Closius, VCF's President and CEO. "The strategic initiatives are tailored to enhance and Build Community. But more importantly, if we don't promote, preserve, and grow Valleyness, I fear the next generation will lose that sense of pride and positive energy that shaped this region."

VCF's Board of Directors want Valleyness to shape decisions and to ensure its tenets are cultivated in its work throughout the region. VCF also wants other Valley organizations to adopt Valleyness in one form or another.

"Valleyness is not just about feeling connected to the Valley, it's about actively contributing to its prosperity and resilience and never forgetting our rich heritage we have here," said Nancy Valentine, VCF's Board Chair. "It encourages inclusivity, fosters mutual respect, and promotes pride in the Valley."

"We invite every member of our community to join us in embracing Valleyness, a commitment to a prosperous, united, and vibrant Valley," Closius said. "Together, we will continue to build a legacy of impact, ensuring that our community remains a place where

## Valleyness™:

Valleyness is an expression of the region's unique essence. It's a word that captures the neighborly, kind, caring spirit, and rich history engrained in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton.

Valleyness encompasses a set of values, characteristics, and actions that traditionally define the Valley community and its people. Valleyness is the embodiment of positive and good qualities, actions, and deeds, that create a strong and vibrant community that cares for its members and works together to build a better future.

# Smart Investment

## Shaping the Future: VCF's Strategic Plan Embraces Valleyness and Building Community

everyone can thrive and contribute to a shared and prosperous future.”

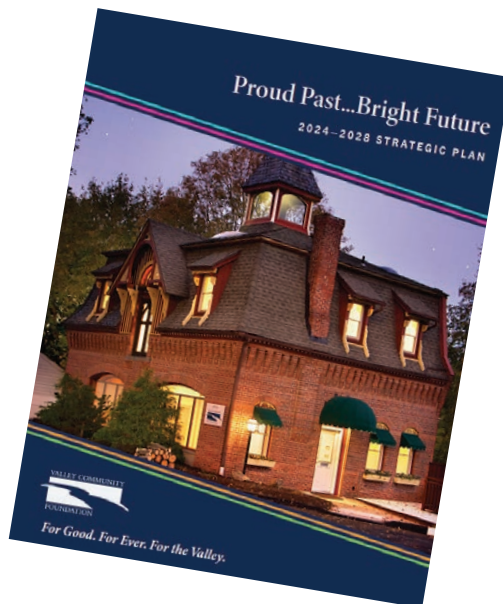
### 2024-2028 Strategic Plan

VCF's new Strategic Plan sets forth a detailed and ambitious roadmap for the next five years, underpinned by the principles of Valleyness, a new term that describes the region's unique brand of community spirit and caring collaborations.

The strategic initiatives are tailored to enhance VCF community engagement, expand philanthropic impact, to ensure organizational sustainability, all the while making sure that Valleyness plays a role in tangible outcomes. One of the primary goals is to increase the number of community partnerships and leverage local resources to address pressing social issues. VCF will continue sponsoring community forums to engage residents in dialogue and decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and included in shaping the Valley's future.

“The development of this Strategic Plan required tremendous effort and dedication from all involved,” Valentine said. “Our goals for increased community partnerships, sustainable philanthropy, and measurable impact are designed to ensure that we continue to support and uplift the Valley in meaningful ways.”

The Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of sustainable philanthropy. VCF aims to grow its endowment over the next five years and provide a stable financial foundation to support ongoing and future initiatives. This growth will be



achieved through targeted fundraising campaigns, donor engagement strategies, and the introduction of new endowment campaigns that align with the values of Valleyness.

“Crafting the new Strategic Plan was a rigorous and deeply collaborative process,” Closius said. “Our team, board, and community partners dedicated countless hours to ensure that every detail aligns with the essence of Valleyness.”

“This plan is not just a document, it's a testament to our commitment to nurturing the Valley's spirit and fostering sustainable growth,” Closius said. “As we celebrate 20 years of VCF, this strategic roadmap will guide us in creating an even stronger, more connected community.”

**To download a copy of VCF's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan go to [ValleyFoundation.Org](https://ValleyFoundation.Org).**

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*We invite every member of our community to join us in embracing Valleyness, a commitment to a prosperous, united, and vibrant Valley*

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## Featured Fund

### Valley Community Fund: The Power of Unrestricted Giving at VCF



*Judy and Bill Bassett established the Valley Community Fund in 2005, one the first unrestricted endowment funds ever created at VCF.*

In 2005, the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) staff and volunteers witnessed the establishment of a legacy that would continuously adapt and address the ever-evolving needs of our community.

The Valley Community Fund, established by Bill and Judy Bassett, is evidence of the perpetual power of unrestricted endowment funds. The Bassetts hoped their fund would ensure “that all donors with gifts of any size can invest in the community endowment which supports our

community’s opportunities and ever-changing needs over time.” Unrestricted funds like the Valley Community Fund are not earmarked for specific purposes but are instead allocated by VCF’s Board of Directors to areas where they are most needed. Over the years, this fund has become a vital part of VCF’s grantmaking activities, enhancing its ability to respond to immediate crises, and support a broad spectrum of causes that uplift the Valley community.

Donations to VCF during the Great Give have been directed into the Valley Community Fund for specific campaigns, such as the COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Fund. This year, gifts made to VCF through the Great Give will be used to offset nearly \$600,000 in grant requests, an unprecedented amount showing dire need in the region. Such flexibility highlights the critical role that unrestricted funds play in VCF’s strategy, allowing it to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging community needs.

“The agility of unrestricted funds is what makes them so effective,” said Sharon Closius, VCF’s President

and CEO. “They empower VCF to laser-focus support on nonprofits and causes exactly when and where it is needed most without the delay of earmarking funds for predefined purposes.”

The success story of the Valley Community Fund, and other unrestricted funds at VCF, is not just about the funds themselves but also about the vision and trust of donors like Bill and Judy Bassett who understood the long-term benefits of flexible giving.

Looking to the future, VCF is in the early stages of establishing a new special unrestricted fund. The yet-named fund will be supported through a multi-year endowment campaign aimed at supporting community leadership and the mission of community building in general.

“As we move forward, our work at VCF is much more than grantmaking these days,” Closius said. “This new fund symbolizes a renewed commitment to broaden VCF’s impact, further enabling us to nurture and develop our community’s capacity for growth and resilience.”

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## Planned Giving

The Gates Society is the Valley Community Foundation’s planned giving community. Your planned gift will impact the charities and causes you’re you care about forever. To learn how you can be a member of the Gates Society and make an ever-lasting impact in the Valley, call 203-751-9162 or learn more at [ValleyFoundation.Org](http://ValleyFoundation.Org)



# Community Investment

## Robust Community Grants Program Sees Diverse Applications and Increased Need

The Valley Community Foundation's (VCF) Community Grants Program saw an impressive influx of applications this year, reflecting both the growing needs and the innovative spirit of the community.

VCF received 21 community grant applications this year, totaling more than \$47,000 in requests. However, the budget for community grants was \$35,000. The goal of the community grants program is to support volunteer or nonprofit community groups that help and promote Valley organizations or initiatives and that have limited staffing and resources. VCF's community grants range from \$250 to \$2,500 and are geared towards new or recurring programs, as well as civic and community engagement efforts.

"What stood out this year was the significant number of applications from grassroots organizations that had never applied before," said Liz Kennard, Chair of VCF's Community Grants Committee. "This represents about two-thirds of the total requests, highlighting a shift towards local and community-driven initiatives."

Community grants have been a cornerstone of VCF's mission from its inception in 2004 and even before, dating back to The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and the now defunct Valley Advisory Committee. These smaller investments are vital to organizations that rely heavily on volunteers.

The focus and content of many grant applications this year also marked a notable change. "A significant number of requests were aimed at supporting food security or fostering community

conversations throughout the Valley," said Valerie Knight-Di Gangi, VCF's Director of Programs. "This shift underscores the increasing awareness and need to address food challenges in the region."

She also said it was encouraging to see so many groups eager to engage in meaningful dialogues about important issues, seeking creative ways to facilitate these community conversations.

Knight-Di Gangi said despite the tight budget, the Grants Committee, comprised of 14 community members, made strategic recommendations to ensure the most effective use of available funds.

"As with all of our grant programs, there are usually more requests in the door than we have funding to support," Knight-Di Gangi said. "Tough choices needed to be made, some organizations either got less funding than requested or no funding at all. But we always leave the door open, providing opportunities for organizations to learn how to be successful grant recipients in the future."

Looking ahead, she said VCF hopes to expand its community grants support in the coming years.

"In an ideal world, we would have more money next year to support the needs of these organizations and not have to reduce any funding requests," Knight-Di Gangi said. "We also hope to have more organizations apply to us who have not done so in the past. It's my guess that there is a lot of great work that gets done in the Valley that we aren't even aware of, and we would love to provide funding for some of these projects as well."

*"A significant number of requests were aimed at supporting food security or fostering community conversations throughout the Valley,"*

## Community Grants Grantees 2024

All In for Oxford - \$1,400

All in for Seymour - \$1,540

Annual Thanksgiving Basket Committee - \$2,000

Belle Sol Inc.- \$2,000

Boy Scout Troop 3 Derby - \$2,500

Friends of the Derby Public Library - \$1,500

Little Free Pantry on Skokorat - \$2,500

Master's Table Community Meals, Inc. - \$2,500

Oxford Neighbor to Neighbor Pantry - \$2,500

Pack 51 - \$2,200

Ruth's House - \$2,100

Seymour Food 2 Kids - \$2,500

Shelton CT Farmers Market - \$2,000

Southford Falls Quilt Guild - \$1,000

St. Thomas the Apostle Church - \$1,260

The Table - \$1,500

Traveling Toys, Inc. - \$2,500

Troop 51 - \$1,500



Organizers and supporters of the Little Free Pantry on Skokorat pose at the pantry's location in Seymour. The grassroots community initiative, started by resident, Jenny Rice, received a VCF Community Grant recently to help support the pantry's mission and food security in the Valley.



# Good News About the Valley

## Celebrating Generosity: The Valley Shines During the 2024 Great Give



**T**he 2024 Great Give wasn't just great this year, it was fantastic!

Despite inflation and other economic hurdles, Valley nonprofits collectively raised more than \$507,000 during the 2024 Great Give in May, making it one of the most successful Great Give fundraising events ever in the Valley.

The 36-hour online giving extravaganza again underscored the Valley's reputation for extraordinary generosity, contributing significantly to the record \$3.8 million total donated across the Valley and

Greater New Haven region. The community's support was particularly evident in the Valley -- Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton -- where nonprofits received more than \$431,000. By the event's end, 58 Valley-based organizations, more than ever before, had taken part, with a total of 1,440 donations made by those who live and work in the Valley.

A highlight of this year's event was the substantial contribution from the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) Donor Advised fundholders, who alone donated more than \$234,000.

"I am always amazed when the final totals from the Great Give are completed," said Sharon Closius, VCF's President and CEO. "Our Valley's deep-rooted caring and giving nature is always demonstrated through such incredible support to our nonprofits."

The continued success of this event highlights the strong philanthropic spirit that thrives in the region, Closius said.

When the final tallies were made, three Valley organizations ranking in the top 10 for the highest amounts raised. BHcare led with \$68,344, followed by TEAM, Inc., with \$54,439, and The Boys and Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, raised \$49,181. Not to be outdone, Shelton's Center Stage Theatre was also one of the top 25 fundraisers.

Launched in 2010 by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (TCF), the Great Give has been a pivotal and important event for local philanthropy, amassing more than \$28.6 million for area nonprofits during the past 14 years.

***Editors note: If you are involved with a nonprofit in the Valley and would like to participate in next year's Great Give, go to GreatGive.Org for more information.***