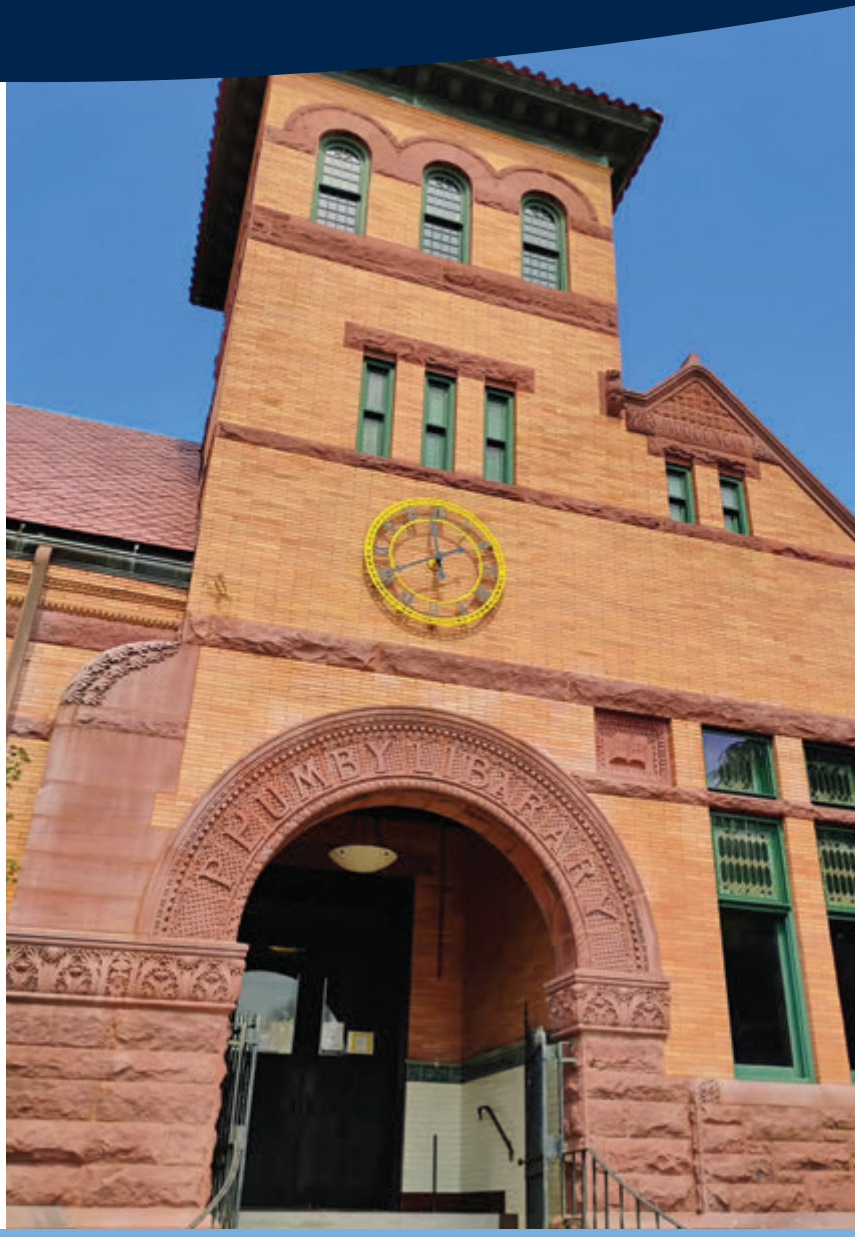
VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Legacy *Matters*







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FOR GOOD FOR EVER FOR THE VALLEY

Smart Investment
The Valley's Hidden Treasures



The Osborne Homestead Museum.

From historic landmarks and natural beauty to modern healthcare and community gathering places, remarkable destinations can be found close to home.

Some of the Valley's greatest treasures have been part of its landscape for generations. They can be found along its rivers and trails, in old mills and opera houses, on town greens and in the public institutions that continue to bring people together. Some are familiar landmarks that residents may pass every day without stopping to consider their history. Others sit quietly in plain sight, waiting to be discovered.

Few people know these places and their stories better than Jack Walsh, a lifelong Derby resident, former teacher, beloved high school basketball coach and local historian.

"Osbornedale State Park, the Kellogg Environmental Center and the Osborne Homestead Museum would be at the top of my list," Walsh said.

Together, these Derby destinations offer something for nearly everyone -- walking trails, open space, environmental education, gardens, art, architecture and a window into the region's past. They demonstrate several qualities that help make a community exciting and accessible -- public spaces where families can explore, children can learn, neighbors can gather and visitors can experience something meaningful without traveling far from home.

Walsh's list also includes the falls and fish ladder in Seymour, the 109-year-old (and still going strong) Recreation Camp along the Housatonic River in Derby, French Memorial Park in Seymour and the town greens in Derby and Shelton.

These are places that provide beauty and recreation, but they also contribute to a community's identity. Parks, greens, trails and waterways invite people to slow down, spend time outdoors and feel connected to where they live.

The Valley's geography has always shaped its development. Derby, founded in 1675, sits at the confluence of the Housatonic and Naugatuck rivers. Those waterways provided the power and transportation that helped make Derby and the surrounding Naugatuck Valley an early center of American manufacturing. Mills, shipbuilding, textiles and toolmaking flourished here, attracting generations of immigrant workers and families whose labor, perseverance and traditions helped define the region.

Often called the "Mother of the Valley," Derby gave rise to several neighboring communities and helped establish a regional identity that remains strong today. That history is visible in places such as the Birmingham Green Historic District, where 19th-century town

Five Towns, One Shared Spirit
Valleyness
Ansonia • Derby • Oxford • Seymour • Shelton

Valleyness is a word used to express the Valley's unique essence. It's a word that captures the neighborly, kind, caring spirit, and rich history ingrained 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
The Valley's Hidden Treasures

"What makes the Valley special is that our history, natural beauty, culture and modern community assets all exist side by side."

planning and architecture tell part of the story of the Valley's growth. It can also be seen along the canals of Shelton and Derby and at the Housatonic Dam that once fed them. Walsh noted that a surviving lock on the Shelton Canal has been discussed as the centerpiece of a potential small park at the end of Canal Street.

The Sterling Opera House in Derby and the Ansonia Opera House are also reminders of a time when these communities were bustling centers of industry, culture and entertainment. Both towns have plans and volunteers working on restoration plans for those opera houses, and Walsh thinks music will be heard once again from both. "The Sterling and Ansonia opera houses are remnants of the past, and maybe the future," Walsh said.

Walsh also recommends visiting the Uptown Burial Ground in Derby and other historic cemeteries throughout the Valley. These quiet spaces contain the names and stories of community founders, veterans, industrialists, laborers and families whose lives helped shape the region.

The Valley's historical societies play an essential role in preserving those stories, artifacts and records. Public libraries are equally important.

"I don't know that they are necessarily hidden, but the public libraries in each of the towns are critical elements in the life of each town," Walsh said.

Yet the Valley's treasures are not limited to historic places or reminders of the past. They also include modern institutions that continue to grow, innovate and respond to the changing needs of the community. When Sharon Closius talks about the Valley's hidden treasures, one of the first places she mentions may surprise some people: Griffin Hospital.



"People often think of a community treasure as a historic building, a scenic park or a beloved landmark -- and the Valley certainly has all of those," said Closius, President and CEO of the Valley Community Foundation (VCF). "But a treasure can also be an institution that continues to grow, innovate and improve people's lives. Griffin Hospital is a wonderful example."

Closius points to Griffin's new EmPATH Unit -- the state's first of-its-kind Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment, and Healing Unit. She also said the hospital's plans for a new state-of-the-art cancer treatment technology upgrade as part of its Center for Cancer Care program will make it a leader in cancer treatment for the region.

"Griffin Hospital has served generations of Valley families, but it is also investing in the future of healthcare right here in our community," Closius said. "You do not always have to travel to a large city to find innovation, specialized services and compassionate care. Griffin is truly a Valley treasure, and it is one that continues to evolve."

Griffin is one example of the interesting places, institutions and stories found throughout Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton. Other treasures are woven into everyday Valley life: the Jones Family Farms in Shelton, the Derby Greenway tracing the rivers, neighborhood restaurants, local businesses, community theaters, houses of worship, volunteer firehouses and gathering places where friendships and traditions endure.

Taken together, these places show how the Valley honors its past while continuing to build for the future. Its historic landmarks, outdoor spaces, cultural institutions, libraries, businesses and healthcare facilities make the region more vibrant, welcoming and accessible to people of all ages.

"What makes the Valley special is that our history, natural beauty, culture and modern community assets all exist side by side," Closius said. "Sometimes we become so accustomed to these places that we forget how remarkable they are. Rediscovering them gives us another reason to feel proud of the Valley -- and another reason to help preserve and strengthen it."

Editor's note: What Valley treasure would you add? Share your favorite place, institution, landmark or little-known piece of history on Facebook and tag VCF. We would love to share your suggestions and help more people discover the many treasures that make the Valley such a special place to call home.

Featured Fund
Plumb Memorial Tricentennial Fund



One of Plumb Memorial Library's treasured stained glass windows.

The Plumb Memorial Tricentennial Fund reflects a remarkable commitment to the library's future.

In 1976, as communities across the country celebrated America's Bicentennial, the leaders of Shelton's Plumb Memorial Library did something extraordinary. They began planning for the nation's Tricentennial -- 100 years into the future.

The library board invested money at a local bank with the intention that it would remain untouched and continue growing until 2076. The goal was to ensure that future generations would have resources available when Plumb Memorial Library -- or the Huntington Branch Library -- needed to expand, modernize or respond to needs that could not yet be imagined.

That decision reflected the library's own history. Plumb Memorial Library was built in 1895, but within only a decade, its Board of Directors believed the library had already outgrown its physical space. Nearly 80 more years would pass before the public approved funding for an addition.

Having witnessed how long a major expansion could take, library leaders understood the importance of preparing well in advance for the next one.

In 2016 -- 40 years after the original investment was made -- the library board took another important step to protect that vision. It established the Plumb Memorial Tricentennial Fund at the Valley Community Foundation (VCF), an endowed fund, and transfered the assets to that fund with the directive that the fund cannot be used for the library until the country turns 300 years old.

"This was a remarkably thoughtful and forward-looking plan," said Sharon Closius, VCF President and CEO. "The people who established this fund understood that they might never personally see its ultimate impact. They were willing to set something aside, allow it to grow and entrust it to future generations. That is community stewardship in its truest form."

At the time of the transfer, Board Treasurer Aleta Miner (now VCF's Board chairwoman) explained why the board chose VCF.

"This is the second fund the Board has entrusted to VCF," Miner said at the time. "The staff at the foundation has the knowledge to provide guidance as we strive for specific goals. By partnering with VCF, our hope is that others will learn of this fund and contribute to it."

That hope has become part of the fund's continuing story. People who value the library and believe in its future have made donations over the years, adding to an endowment designed to grow through both giving and time.

"The beauty of this fund is that people can continue building it, generation after generation," Closius said. "A person who loves the library today can make a gift knowing it will join with the gifts of others and help support an institution that will still be serving the community many decades from now."

Libraries must continually adapt to changes in technology, education and the ways people access information. Yet they also preserve what might otherwise be lost. Plumb Memorial Library maintains historic items and periodicals documenting Shelton's people and defining moments. Researchers travel from across the country to use its materials for genealogical and historical research.

The Tricentennial Fund offers a lesson that extends well beyond one library. A community does not have to know exactly what its residents will need 50 years from now to begin preparing for them today.

"This is an idea other organizations, families and donors can embrace," Closius said. "Sometimes the most meaningful gift is one that looks far beyond the present and says to future generations: We believed in you, we planned for you, and we wanted you to have the resources to thrive."

VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Planned Giving

The Valley Community Foundation (VCF) welcomes **Robert M. Patulak; Greg and Ann Pepe; and Janet Smith and Wayne Van Allen** to The Gates Society, VCF's planned giving community. Your planned gift will impact the charities and causes you're passionate about forever, regardless of the amount. Call us at 203-751-9162 or learn more at ValleyFoundation.org

Community Investment
Multi-Year Grants Give Valley Nonprofits Greater Stability

Dependable funding gives nonprofits something especially valuable: the ability to look beyond the next fiscal year.

In 2026, the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) committed $350,000 in new three-year grants to eight nonprofits addressing needs ranging from food and energy assistance to housing, healthcare, youth development, economic growth and the arts.

VCF is also honoring 21 second- and third-year commitments awarded during its 2024 and 2025 grant cycles. Together, the new and continuing commitments bring VCF's 2026 multi-year grantmaking investment to $600,000.

"Our nonprofit partners continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience while responding to increasingly complex community needs."

The Valley Council for Health & Human Services received the largest award, recognizing its role as the Valley's primary convener of health and human-services partnerships. Its grant will strengthen collaboration among nonprofits, government agencies and community partners while helping connect residents with critical services.

Six of the new grants provide core operating support, while two fund



civic-health initiatives serving Valley residents. Four are partnership grants with The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven because the organizations serve both Greater New Haven and the Valley.

The grant review process also revealed important regional trends, including rising food and energy insecurity, housing challenges, demand for accessible health services and nonprofits' growing focus on long-term sustainability.

"Our nonprofit partners continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience while responding to increasingly complex community needs," said Sharon Closius, VCF's President and CEO. "These grants represent much more than financial support. They are a commitment to helping organizations think beyond the next fiscal year, innovate with confidence and build the long-term capacity needed to serve Valley residents well into the future."

Stable support allows nonprofits to retain talented staff, strengthen partnerships and concentrate more fully on their missions, creating stronger organizations and, ultimately, a stronger Valley.

The eight organizations receiving multi-year grants are:

Connecticut Hurricanes Drum and Bugle Corps — **$35,000**

Housatonic Council, Boy Scouts of America — **$30,000**

Operation Fuel, Inc./ Generation Power CT — **$25,000**

Partnership for Strong Communities — **$30,000**

Rape Crisis Center of Milford, Inc. — **$30,000**

Shelton Economic Development Corporation — **$50,000**

St. Vincent de Paul of the Valley — **$30,000**

Valley Council for Health & Human Services — **$120,000**



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Good News About the Valley

VCF and Valley Celebrates USA's 250th Anniversary

America's 250th anniversary is being celebrated throughout 2026 -- and the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) helped local communities mark the historic occasion in ways that reflect the region's own history and character.

This summer, VCF funded a special celebratory initiative: "The Valley Celebrates America's 250 Years" micro-grants. VCF awarded $7,500 in total grants to 16 recipients comprised of municipalities, area nonprofit groups and a high schools. The grants supported historical programs, cultural performances, educational activities, family events and patriotic celebrations across Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton.

Among the projects were community heritage tours, local-history presentations, a patriotic student essay contest, Colonial and modern technology demonstrations, Shakespeare in the Park, America 250 trivia and bingo, Scouting activities and community celebrations.

"America's 250th anniversary is more than a celebration of our nation's past, it's an opportunity to reflect on the people, places and ideals that continue to shape our communities," said Sharon Closius, VCF President and CEO. "Through these micro-grants, we're encouraging organizations to tell local stories, celebrate our shared heritage and bring people together in ways that strengthen the Valley for generations to come."

The Valley Celebrates AMERICA'S 250 YEARS
A Valley Community Foundation Initiative

VCF also created free commemorative flags, bumper stickers and other promotional items to encourage community pride and participation. Items are available while supplies last through participating libraries, historical societies and community partners.

Follow VCF on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn for updates about future America 250 activities and opportunities throughout the Valley.

Each of the following organizations received a micro-grant to support Valley-wide America 250-themed projects and programming:

Ansonia Public Library

Naugatuck Valley Health District

Seymour Historical Society

Electronic Valley

Valley Shakespeare Festival

Shelton Juneteenth Committee (TEAM, Inc.)

City of Ansonia (in collaboration with the City of Derby)

Dr. Joseph M. DiRienzo's Lower Naugatuck Valley History Series

Derby Historical Society

Derby Public Library

Emmett O'Brien Technical High School

Celebrate Shelton

Scouting America -- Housatonic Council

Town of Seymour Events Committee

Traveler On A Mission

Catholic War Veterans Post 1562