

Your community. Your impact.

SPRING 2024

INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY EQUITY INCUBATOR

Building Power to Create Change

FAIRFIELD COUNTY IS BUBBLING with talented and passionate people who are working to create a better future for their neighbors.

With the recent launch of our new Community Equity Incubator, more of these community changemakers will have access to resources that will help them achieve their goals.

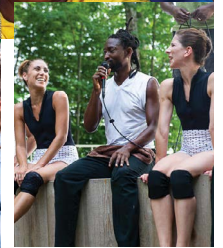
The Community Equity Incubator is a two-year community capacity building and grantmaking program that aims to increase resident leadership, spark creative problem-solving, and accelerate the growth of innovative, community-based organizations.

“Positive change happens when inspired people come together to solve problems, identify solutions, and build coalitions that drive action,” said Chinedum Nnodum, the Community Foundation’s Director of Community Strategies. “The Community Equity Incubator seeds promising ideas for equity and social change in our community by investing directly in the people and organizations that are championing these ideas.”

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The Community Equity Incubator connects closely with our priorities of supporting equity, authentic engagement, and community-led solutions.

NORA MORENO CARGIE
President of Point32Health Foundation



Pictured above: (Top left) grantee, Women Against Mass Incarceration; (top right); grantee, Self Care for Recovery; (bottom right); grantee, Ted Thomas Dance Foundation.

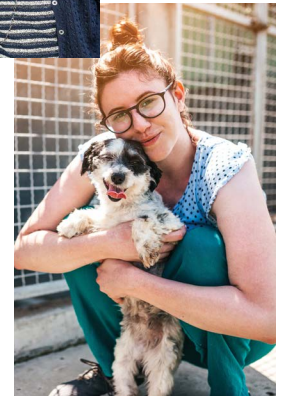
This spring, eight community leaders will begin their journey through the inaugural Incubator. Each will receive \$10,000 over two years to accelerate their work – and will be welcomed into a peer support and learning community with fellow members. They will also be connected to interested donors and potential funders who can provide additional support.

Point32 Health Foundation is playing an important role in kickstarting this promising new program – committing \$100,000 over the next two years.

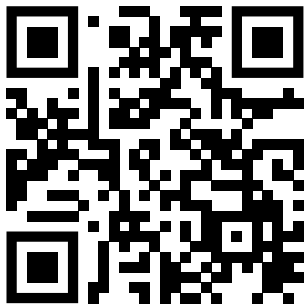
“The Community Equity Incubator connects closely with our priorities of supporting equity, authentic engagement, and community-led solutions,” said Nora Moreno Cargie, President of Point32Health Foundation and Vice President for Corporate Citizenship at Point32Health. “This kind of engagement and collaboration is critical to achieving health equity in our communities.”



Creating change in your community is easier than ever



scan me



With the minimum amount to open a donor-advised fund now starting at \$5,000, it's never been easier to help Fairfield County nonprofits tackle work that matters to you.

FCCFoundation.org/DAF

Get Started

Explore ways we can help you **give back better**. Contact Joseph Collin, VP of Philanthropy at (203) 750-3211 or JCollin@FCCFoundation.org.



Senator Blumenthal joined many of our Equity Research Advisory Panel participants at a press conference launching "The Upside of Equity" research project.

Exploring the 'Upside of Equity' in Fairfield County

A more equitable community can benefit everyone who lives in our region.

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IS TESTING THIS IDEA through a year-long study that will measure the impact of racial equity on Fairfield County's economy.

The expansive first-of-its-kind study, called *The Upside of Equity: Exploring the Economic Benefits of Closing Racial Equity Gaps in Fairfield County*, is being conducted in collaboration with DataHaven and the Urban Institute. Researchers are also working closely with an advisory panel of Fairfield County community members.

The research – funded by a \$462,000 grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families – will study the costs of inequity, the benefits of equity, and how system-level solutions can lead to economic benefits for all Fairfield County residents.

"There's a common saying that 'a rising tide lifts all boats,'" said Dr. Tanya A. Hills, the Community Foundation's Director of Learning & Evaluation. "This research aims to test that idea in ways that identify and quantify the impact of equitable policies and practices on the broader community."

In turn, the Community Foundation aims to provide an economic case for creating an equitable Fairfield County.

"Efforts to increase fairness, opportunity and access in our region should be rooted in ethics and justice," said Mendi Blue Paca, FCCF's President and CEO. "But not everyone is guided by moral arguments. For many, economic data is a persuasive point for looking at challenges in new ways and with different goals. We anticipate that *The Upside of Equity* will provide some of that perspective."



Equity Research Advisory Panel member Shamare Holmes shared her personal experiences with racial inequity and why it's critical to be a community voice for the project.

“It’s Pure Gratitude Driving Us”

WHEN TOM SANTA’S FATHER and uncles sought ways to mark the 50th anniversary of Santa Energy, there was plenty to celebrate. After all, their parents Stephen and Madelyn had started the family business in 1940 with a single truck. They eventually expanded to provide fuel services for 27 towns in Fairfield and New Haven counties.

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We hope the Community Foundation continues to tell us where help is needed so we can broaden our vision and find new opportunities to make a difference.”

TOM SANTA
Chair of the Board, Santa Energy Corporation

While the brothers were eager to mark their parents’ business success, they wanted to show appreciation to their customers, too.

In 1990, they did both— by creating the Stephen and Madelyn Santa Environmental Fund at the Community Foundation. With company contributions to this corporate donor-advised fund (DAF), Santa Energy made grants to nonprofits serving local residents—and they haven’t stopped.

According to Tom, part of the third generation of Santas to lead the company, the fund also reflected their business values. “Santa Energy was always tuned into energy conservation and environmental protection,” he stated. “In an industry like ours, it’s a focus.”

In 2016, compelled by the company’s continued good fortune, the family established another corporate DAF, the Santa Family Fund, at the Community Foundation. “Santa Energy wanted to do even more for the community,” he said. “It’s pure gratitude driving us.”



Stephen Santa climbing into his first company truck circa 1940, the year he and his wife Madelyn founded Santa Energy.



◀ Stephen Santa’s grandson Peter Russell, current President of Santa Fuel, Inc., with Lorraine Gibbons, Executive Director of the Cardinal Shehan Center – an organization the family has long supported through philanthropic giving.

With its company headquarters in Black Rock Harbor and deep family roots in Bridgeport, most grants from the fund are directed to improving educational opportunities for city residents.

“Tradesmen support our industry, so trade education is a particular focus,” Tom noted. “We hope the Community Foundation continues to tell us where help is needed so we can broaden our vision and find new opportunities to make a difference.”

To learn more about corporate donor advised funds at Fairfield County’s Community Foundation, contact Joseph Collin, Vice President of Philanthropy, at (203) 750-3211 or JCollin@FCCFoundation.org.



▲ Joan Weisman, pictured top right at our 2023 Fund for Women & Girls luncheon, is a founding member of FWG.

◀ Fred and Joan Weisman during an AmeriCares Airlift Benefit trip to the Dominican Republic in 2011. The Weismans were strong supporters of AmeriCares' work, including health and housing initiatives in Bridgeport.

For the Weismans, Community is Family

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THEIR MARRIAGE, Joan Weisman and her late husband Fred relocated frequently around the country. From Kansas City to Phoenix to Las Vegas to Stamford they met neighbors who expanded their perspectives about the challenges communities face. For the Weismans, their communities became their extended family—and an inspiration for social action.

The upbeat duo rolled up their sleeves wherever they settled, organizing dinners for people experiencing homelessness, serving on nonprofit boards, and supporting families during the holidays.

“My husband had incredible energy,” Joan says fondly. “And it was an important example to set for our children.”

To achieve the same level of impact through philanthropy as they did through volunteering, Joan and Fred connected with Fairfield County’s Community Foundation 30 years ago and opened the Fred and Joan Weisman Fund, a donor advised fund. Joan also became a founding donor of the Community Foundation’s Fund for Women & Girls.

“Over the years, we got valuable advice on investing in charities,” Joan says. “We relied on the Community Foundation’s thorough research so we could give wisely, get exposed to different nonprofits, and learn about our community’s needs. We found the right places to donate and felt good about it. Because what’s this world like if you can’t help other people?”

Since Fred’s passing, Joan has continued their legacy of caring. A decade since starting the first social action committee at her Stamford retirement community, she’s raised astonishing sums for Alzheimer’s research and cancer treatment through playful fashion shows and lively silent auctions and adult carnivals. “Fundraising is fun!” Joan proclaims.

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**To learn more about donor advised funds at Fairfield County’s Community Foundation, contact Sara DeRose, Director of Development & Philanthropic Services, at [SDeRose@FCCFoundation.org](mailto:SDeRose@FCCFoundation.org) or (203) 750-3200.**

# Impact Snapshot

Fiscal year to date: July 1, 2023 through April 1, 2024

**250+** local nonprofits

served by our Center for Nonprofit Excellence



**\$2.25 million**

contributed by donors and partners to support community impact work



**463** people participated in Equity Lab events and initiatives

**11** state bills

to advance equity supported through public advocacy



A community of philanthropists, activists & advocates dedicated to building an equitable Fairfield County.



**TEXT: A4E TO 44321**  
TO LEARN MORE AND JOIN THE MOVEMENT



*"As a Board member, I'm committed to introducing people to the Community Foundation's efforts in promoting equity across Fairfield County. Joining Allies for Equity is an excellent opportunity to deepen your understanding of the challenges at hand and participate in meaningful actions that drive change with others who care."*

**MARIE ROCHA**  
Board Member, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

## Together We Thrive.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation is partnering with our community to create a county where every person has an equitable opportunity to thrive. We work closely with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses and philanthropists to address challenges and identify opportunities to create a stronger, more vibrant community.



Fairfield County's Community Foundation  
40 Richards Avenue | Norwalk, CT 06854  
203.750.3200 | FCCFoundation.org