

Practicing *community*

2026 IMPACT REPORT

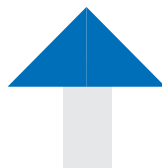


2026 by the *Numbers*

Grants to Nonprofits

**\$27.5
million**

in total grants
awarded



\$20.8 million

in donor-directed grants,
a **7% increase** from 2025



794 grants

to nonprofits serving Fairfield County



\$3.6 million

in strategic grants to nonprofits
**Advocacy • Economic Opportunity
Health • Women & Girls • Youth**

Gatherings

1,250

people attended

47 community events

427 nonprofits
represented



Scholarships

357

scholarships
awarded to students,

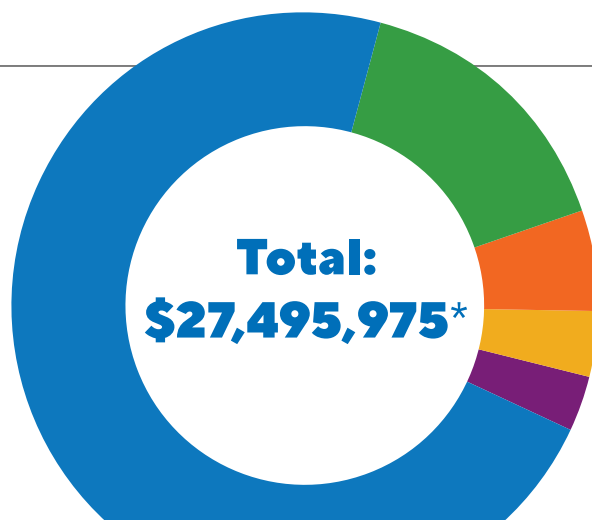
totaling nearly
\$1.6 million



Grants by Fund Type

- Donor Advised \$19,858,998
- Discretionary \$4,291,530
- Scholarship \$1,550,354
- Designated \$984,401
- Agency \$810,692

*Includes nonprofit endowment funds



Dear Friends,

A community is more than a place.

It's what binds us together and drives us to take care of one another. **Community is something we practice together.**

The way we practice community here in Fairfield County is beautifully captured in a poem we commissioned from New Haven Poet Laureate Yexandra Diaz. "Kintsugi" (page 5) describes the Japanese art of repairing pottery with gold. It teaches us that cracks are signs of hope—that despite the pressure, something within keeps growing.

As the stories in this report demonstrate, everything we do at Fairfield County's Community Foundation is rooted in **strengthening our capacity to practice community.** When cracks emerge, we bring neighbors together to learn, adapt, and recommit to what we can accomplish together.

For some, that means joining our Allies community advocacy network and learning how to push for legislation that feeds our children while they're at school and ensures affordable housing for our neighbors. For others, it's participating in The SOUL Fund giving circle to lift up Black-led and Black-serving organizations.

Those relationships build trust—and form the foundation for something much bigger.

Programs such as our Career Pathways initiative and our Food Security Fund bring people and institutions together around shared challenges, building our capacity to mend cracks in the systems that shape opportunity across Fairfield County.

That's what happens when relationships grow into collective action. It starts with glimmers of hope from the people Yex's poem speaks of, "with hearts of gold who melt themselves to mend the gaps."

And from those mended containers, community grows.

Thank you to everyone who chooses to practice community with us—and, in doing so, **strengthens what we are capable of accomplishing together.**

In Community,



Mendi Blue Paca
MENDI BLUE PACA
President & CEO



Maya Reddi
MAYA REDDI
Chair



Celebrating Community

On June 5th, more than 250 nonprofit leaders, donors, advocates, elected officials, and community members gathered for our inaugural Celebration of Community. The event opened with a New Orleans-style jazz processional and a reading of "Kintsugi," a poem commissioned by the Community Foundation. Videos celebrated the work of grantees, partners, and advocates who are creating change in Fairfield County. Guests added ribbons representing their values to the Connections Create Change installation and recorded stories at the Ideas Take Root station about how ideas emerge, grow, and gain support.

The gathering was a powerful reminder that community is built through relationships, shared purpose, and people who keep showing up for one another. We are grateful to sponsors Webster Bank and Hartford HealthCare, our event host, for making this celebration possible.



Read More:
FCCFoundation.org/Celebration26



Community grows stronger when people come together to share ideas, build relationships, and invest in a common future. Supporting this event helped that future take shape.

KELLY GIORDANO
Managing Director, Philanthropy
Webster Bank



Kintsugi

*Selected excerpt from an original work commissioned by
Fairfield County's Community Foundation*

By Yexandra Diaz

Kintsugi is the Japanese art
Of repairing broken pottery
By mending cracks with gold

And every movement needs
that kind of vessel

Before hope becomes headline
It begins as a conversation
In rooms like this one

And should the clay pot crack
Let it crack in gladness

Because cracks mean pressure was endured
Weight was carried
And something inside kept growing

And it is the people
With hearts of gold
Who melt themselves
To mend the gaps

The ones transforming funding into futures
The ones proving
That community is not merely a place
It is a practice

And that when people come together
With courage, compassion and conviction

We do more than repair the world

Together,

We remake it.



Download the full poem:
FCCFoundation.org/Kintsugi



Everyone Can Be a Philanthropist

THERE'S NO ONE WAY TO LOVE YOUR COMMUNITY: THE MANY PATHS TO POSITIVE-CHANGE WORK

Some come to connect. Others to learn, speak out, or amplify their giving. What unites Fairfield County residents who engage with the Community Foundation is their commitment to making their community stronger. Explore some of the ways volunteers, donors, and advocates are practicing community and effecting change.



Shaping Future *Changemakers* • Page 08

Through the Youth Philanthropy Council, 16- to 24-year-olds learned together, awarded grants, and shared fresh perspectives to fuel our work.

Engaging in *Advocacy* • Page 10

Guided by a “together, we can” spirit, The Allies network is leveraging public policy’s role to help solve some of our region’s challenges.



Giving *Together* • Page 12

In its first year, The SOUL Fund giving circle grew to 114 members who are pooling resources to support Black-led and -serving organizations.

Investing in *Community* • Page 14

As donor-advised fundholders, Gary and Susie Singer helped their hometown of Ridgefield grow into Connecticut’s first Cultural District.



Community is not merely a place. It is a practice. It is the work of showing up, in boardrooms and classrooms, in clinics and courtrooms, in living rooms and legislative chambers, and refusing to stop. That is the work the Community Foundation is committing to deepen.

MENDI BLUE PACA
President & CEO
Fairfield County's
Community Foundation



What *Shapes* Your Philanthropy?

Giving can grow from the people who have inspired us, the experiences that have changed us, the issues we care deeply about, and the kind of community we want to create. These questions can help you reflect on what feels personally meaningful.

- ☐ **What has made a difference in your life?**
Think about the people, places, and opportunities that have shaped your own story. What would you like others to have the chance to experience, too?
- ☐ **What causes do you care about most?**
Consider the issues, needs, and possibilities you find yourself returning to again and again. Where would you most like to help create positive change?
- ☐ **How would you like to give?**
Philanthropy includes financial support, time, expertise, relationships, advocacy, and leadership. What can you offer, and how would you like to put it to work?

You don't need to have all the answers before you begin. Your philanthropic path can start with something as simple as a conversation about what you care about and what you hope to make possible.

Let's explore where your philanthropy can lead.

Our team can help you consider charitable strategies, funds, and opportunities that reflect your interests and goals. Call us at (203) 750-3200 or reach out by email to start a conversation.



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Supporting the Next Generation of *Changemakers*

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
HELPED YOUNG PEOPLE LEND THEIR
VOICES TO LOCAL PHILANTHROPY



The heart of the Community Foundation's mission is to strengthen Fairfield County by investing in people, ideas, and opportunities that create a stronger, more vibrant region. The Youth Philanthropy Council (YPC) embodied that vision.

"Young people are often described as 'future leaders,' but what this past year has made clear is that you are already leading," Foundation President and CEO Mendi Blue Paca told YPC members at a spring celebration. "When youth are meaningfully included in philanthropy, it doesn't just benefit young people—it makes the work itself stronger."

The YPC recently concluded a two-year pilot program that immersed 16- to 24-year-olds in the inner workings of community-based philanthropy. Cohort members gained exposure to philanthropy careers and community service, while the Foundation got to incorporate younger voices into its work.

"It is because of this program that I hope to become more involved in philanthropy in my career," said YPC graduate Maria.

During in-depth sessions that often featured experienced guest speakers, participants learned:

- How to form a board of directors
- How to develop a case for support, including crafting mission statements, fundraising letters, and promotional materials
- How the grantmaking process works and ways to solicit major gift support

YPC culminated with participants launching their own grant cycle and awarding small grants to 14 community-based organizations addressing educational disparities for youth.

"It challenged me to grow as a contributor, communicator, and emerging leader," YPC graduate Kellie said. "Those lessons will stay with me long after the program concludes."



Inspired by these changemakers? Help create more opportunities for young people: FCCFoundation.org/Youth26

My experience of YPC was excellent. I got to learn so much about the nonprofit world, and those lessons made me appreciate the amazing work nonprofits do.

ELIE

Youth Philanthropy Council graduate



The Practice of Advocacy

THE ALLIES NETWORK BRINGS RESIDENTS TOGETHER TO LEARN, CONNECT, AND ADVANCE CHANGE

When Nora Geissert moved from Los Angeles to Connecticut for a new job 10 years ago, the empty-nester wondered, "How do I get connected to my community?" She wasn't just looking for something to do. She wanted a place to belong.

She found that connection and purpose in the Community Foundation's Allies advocacy network. What began as a search for community gave her a chance to help shape it. Joining with her fellow residents (235 and counting), Geissert learned how the

state Legislature works and how she can raise her voice to effect policy changes that improve lives throughout Fairfield County.

The Allies network is built upon a simple yet powerful concept: Community is a practice. Allies unite around their community, their concern for its future, and their commitment to do something about it.

"When 90 voices come together, that's a lot louder and more effective than one single voice," said Elaine Mintz, the Community Foundation's Senior Vice President of Strategy and External Relations.

During a visit to the state capitol, The Allies got a tip from a state senator: Instead of copying a form

letter, share a paragraph or two about how legislation affects you personally. Allies member Scott Kemp took that to heart and wrote his state representative about a bill that would prohibit higher education institutions from reducing financial aid awards when students earn external scholarships.

Soon after, Kemp learned his state representative was co-sponsoring the legislation. "I felt pretty good about that," Kemp said. As he should. In the final hours of the legislative session, lawmakers passed a bill prohibiting scholarship displacement at Connecticut's public institutions.

It was a powerful reminder that his voice—every voice—counts and can make a difference.



Join our community of advocates: FCCFoundation.org/Allies

Scott Kemp (left) and Nora Geissert (right) are members of The Allies network.





If you care about your community, want it to work better for everyone, and are ready to get more involved by using your voice, the Allies is a perfect place to start.

RYAN DEAL

Sr. Director of Community Philanthropy
Fairfield County's Community Foundation



More Than a Giving Circle

THE SOUL FUND EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS IN ITS FIRST YEAR. THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR YEAR TWO.

When community members gathered in August 2024 for a webinar on Black philanthropy, they were inspired by giving circles in other regions. Why don't we have something like that in Fairfield County, they wondered.

So they created one.

Launched one year later with support from the Community Foundation, The SOUL Fund brings people together around a shared vision of a more vibrant and thriving Fairfield County, where Black-led and Black-serving nonprofits have the resources they need to grow and deepen their impact in the communities they serve.

"It was really a beautiful kind of partnership and dance, being able to fully understand what it could look like for us to formally give back to our community, to be able to create community, to be able to invest in nonprofits that are uplifting Black and Brown people," said Ashley Hampton, SOUL Fund Steering Committee Co-Chair and founding member.

In its first year, the Fund grew to 114 contributing members and awarded nearly \$50,000 in grants to nonprofits that provide mental health and career-pathway support for youth.

But The SOUL Fund goes beyond a typical giving circle. Not only does it fundraise and award dollars, it's also a container for community building, bringing members together for fellowship and formal programming, where they can share ideas, learn

from community nonprofits, and inspire one another.

Now in year two, members new and old are energized to build upon the momentum of the inaugural year.

"It's exciting to be part of something that will empower community for years to come," said Julianne Foy, SOUL Fund Steering Committee Co-Chair and founding member.



Join this circle of changemakers: FCCFoundation.org/SOULFund

What we are building here is really about civic engagement. Through our partnership with the Community Foundation, we've been able to grow our own voice and leadership in making decisions as a community.

ASHLEY HAMPTON
Founding Member & Steering Committee
Co-Chair, The SOUL Fund



“



Through ranked-choice voting, three Black-led organizations received 2026 SOUL Fund grants: My Architecture Workshops, ConnectUs, and House of Darla. Sawubona and Youth Business Initiative CT received honoraria. At the launch of Year Two, Dr. Maggie Young, Chief Recovery Officer at Liberation Programs and recipient of the 2026 Soul of Philanthropy Award, encouraged the crowd: "Every one of us has something to give. Please don't ever sell your gift short."



Investing in Culture, Building Community

HELPING GARY AND SUSIE SINGER SUPPORT RIDGEFIELD'S THRIVING ARTS SCENE

Old home restoration projects are notorious for growing well beyond their initial punch lists.

Yet Gary and Susie Singer's plan to restore the 1710 Cape-style house they bought in Ridgefield in 1979 took restoration to a whole new level. Once completed, the retirees applied their experience to help establish the Ridgefield Historical Society, the first of many local organizations they supported. Over the next 40 years, they helped transform the town's siloed arts and cultural



Susie, Gary, and I had several conversations to help me understand who they are, what they do, and what they want to accomplish. Now, they can concentrate on the joy of giving while the Community Foundation handles their Fund's administration.

JOSEPH COLLIN

Vice President of Philanthropy
Fairfield County's Community Foundation



institutions into a collaborative community designated in 2021 as the first Connecticut Cultural District.

It wasn't easy. As the portfolio of groups they supported grew to 17 and they were getting on in age, the Singers realized they needed help.

They turned to the Community Foundation to create The Gary and Susie Singer Arts & Culture Foundation, a legacy donor-advised fund that lets them continue managing their assets with their longtime financial advisors while the Community Foundation handles the administration, ensuring they get the tax benefits such funds provide.

The fund is grounded in three values:

- **Innovation:** Supporting ideas that had never been considered before.
- **Collaboration:** Bringing together nascent nonprofits to work with one another.
- **Supporting the underserved:** Opening the arts to those who might not otherwise have access.

The results can be seen and heard throughout Ridgefield. There's the free summer concert series, the professional Actors' Equity company, the joint art museum exhibits with string quartet performances, and more.

"There's something magical about this community," Gary said. "When we got here, we didn't know much about it aside from its architecture. But it's our lives now."



Learn how to start a fund:
FCCFoundation.org/DAF

New Funds

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING FUNDS ESTABLISHED OVER THE PAST YEAR.

Gifts noted were made from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

The Belle Haven Club Scholarship Fund

This fund was established to provide scholarship support to students pursuing post-secondary education.

The Efraín “Frankie” Colón Latino Legacy Fund

This fund honors Frankie’s life and values by empowering the Puerto Rican and broader Latino community. Inspired by his belief that a ZIP code should never define a person’s future, the Fund supports initiatives that expand access to education, leadership, and career opportunities—breaking barriers and nurturing potential in Bridgeport and beyond.

The CT League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

This fund was established to support strengthening Connecticut’s environmental movement through education, developing and providing information on issues, and organizing networks of environmental groups to access political power in furtherance of protecting Connecticut’s natural resources.

Charlie Erdmann Empowerment Foundation

Charlie lived a big life, but some things he did quietly. He believed in putting in the “sweat equity” to help others: showing up to teach them, or coach them, or offer them a view about what could be possible. He not only rooted for the underdogs but made them feel like there was nothing they couldn’t achieve with him at their side. This foundation will keep that spirit alive, creating opportunities for those who feel limited to soar, who don’t have access to thrive, who need a hand up to grab tight and look forward with possibility.



Fairfield County’s Food Security Fund

Established by Fairfield County’s Community Foundation’s Board of Directors, this field-of-interest fund provides grants to eligible charitable organizations addressing food security in Fairfield County.

Jack and Maureen Leopold Scholarship Fund

This fund honors the legacy of Dr. John (Jack) A. Leopold (1938-2016) and Maureen Welsh Leopold (1938-present) by providing scholarships to students of Danbury High School.

The Moffly Family Fund

The purpose of the Moffly Family Fund is to support eligible charitable activities of public charities that align with the family’s interests.

The Sullivan Charitable Trust III Fund

This fund was established to support charitable activities of public charitable organizations that align with the donor’s interests.

Debra and Larry Sullivan Family Fund

This fund was established to support charitable activities of public charitable organizations that align with the donor’s interests.

Tackling Community Challenges *Together*

PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF OUR TOUGHEST OBSTACLES

Longstanding challenges like income inequality, health disparities, and barriers to education and employment have affected communities for generations. The Community Foundation brings together and supports cross-sector partners to understand root causes and work toward lasting solutions. Explore this systemic regional work in action.



The Center for Nonprofit *Excellence* • Page 17

A new CNE program helps local nonprofits tap into the collective strength of community by sharing their needs and offering resources.

Career Pathways for *Youth* • Page 18

Local colleges, employers, and community service providers are designing new systems to build a skilled workforce for Fairfield County.



Black Maternal Health Initiative • Page 20

Community partners are working together to make healthy, joyful maternal stories the rule rather than the exception.

Food *Security* Fund • Page 22

Through this new fund, nonprofits can meet urgent community needs while building capacity to address food insecurity for the long term.



There are solutions out there. They require partnership, collaboration, and investment. The answers don't come easily. But they do exist, and they can have a real impact.

**LUTONYA
RUSSELL-HUMES**
Vice President, Grants
& Programs
Fairfield County's
Community Foundation

Helping the Helpers

BRINGING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

Strained by funding cuts, inflation, and uncertainty, nonprofits are increasingly challenged to serve more people with fewer resources, a reality that's rippling through Fairfield County. These organizations help lift up our community. Their success is our success.

That's why supporting and uniting nonprofit professionals is central to the work of the Community Foundation's Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE). A spirit of collaboration filled the room at CNE's inaugural Offers and Needs (OAN) Market at the Wakeman Boys & Girls Club in Bridgeport in April. Participants shared needs and offered resources to help one another.

"I could see this being a useful approach in many venues," said

participant Phil Goodhart. He was so impressed he shared the idea with another business network.

Guided by a trained facilitator, participants shared 24 needs and 38 offers, including storage space, board member recommendations, accountability buddies to learn new skills with, and urban farm space for community events.

The OAN Market clearly resonated. All survey respondents said they left with at least one need or offer to pursue and that they would participate again. It also reminded them that the collective strength of community can carry them

through the most challenging times. Most (85%) said they felt more positive about life after participating.

"I really enjoyed seeing so many organizations come together and getting to know some of the people and work happening in the community," said Kumbie Madondo, Founder & Director of Access Health Services Research.

With the support of longtime partner Wells Fargo, the Community Foundation is expanding the model to a virtual Offers and Needs Market in November and another in-person event next spring.



Fuel programs for our nonprofit community:
FCCFoundation.org/Nonprofits26



The Offers & Needs Market creates the conditions for people to recognize what they have to contribute, name what they need, and discover what becomes possible when we move from individual resources to shared abundance.

LINDSEY TENGATENGA
Executive Director, Five Frogs, Inc.



**CROSS-SECTOR
PARTNERS
WORK TOGETHER
TO IMPROVE
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

From Collaboration to *Careers*

Fairfield County employers struggle to fill critical roles. Young people seek sustainable career pathways. Schools and nonprofits work to provide skills training and support to get them there. Yet none can solve these challenges alone.

By bringing partners together around a shared purpose, the

Community Foundation's Career Pathways initiative is developing new ways to build a thriving workforce.

"The ultimate goal," said Liz Hoagland, the Community Foundation's Senior Director of Education and Workforce Development, "is building a more connected workforce ecosystem

that helps young people succeed, supports employers, and fuels Fairfield County's future."

The first Career Pathways cohort, focused on healthcare, drew 50 applicants for 25 spots. The Community Foundation expanded it to 27 participants, and 20 are moving toward employment. The

program is now expanding its hospital partners.

The initiative is also building a collaborative model for systems change that can be applied to other fields: adapting curricula for industry needs; broadening talent pipelines; and advancing careers rather than simply filling jobs.

CO-INVESTING IN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

For the pilot, Northwell Health provided the employer perspective, CT State brought education and credentialing, and the Family & Children's Agency (FCA) offered coaching and support. Together, they identified barriers to healthcare careers and developed new ways to remove them.

Northwell shared its need for employees with soft skills such as reliability, punctuality, and professionalism. FCA adapted its employability program for healthcare, while CT State aligned its curriculum with employer needs.

The co-designed program supports graduates for up to a year as they settle into their jobs.

"We love that Fairfield County's Community Foundation thought to look at this cross-sector partnership and bring on a community-based organization to provide wraparound support to the young adults in this initiative," said Mary Kate Locke, FCA's Vice President of Youth and Family Empowerment.

That support might include parenting education for a first-time mom working toward her Certified Nursing Assistant certification or help navigating public transportation to get to work. "We're there to guide them through that," said Daisy Velez, FCA's Director of Youth Development.



**Support future innovative partnerships:
FCCFoundation.org/Pathways26**



This innovative program is designed to address the needs of both young people and the business community. By investing in education and workforce development, we are strengthening our community's future.

SHEILA PERRIN
Donor & Former Chair
Fairfield County's Community
Foundation

Leading the Charge

Another way the Community Foundation advances economic mobility for Fairfield County residents is by convening CEOs from leading regional employers to align resources, expertise, and action around strengthening the local economy and workforce.

Together, these business leaders are collaborating on employer-led actions to address regional economic constraints so more residents and businesses can thrive.

"Employers play a central role in creating a more competitive, resilient, and

inclusive regional economy—one where every person in Fairfield County has a fair opportunity to reach their full potential," said Community Foundation President and CEO Mendi Blue Paca. "We are convening employers to turn that vision into a reality."





Together for a Healthier Start

UNITING TO ADVANCE BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH



Black women in Fairfield County face far worse maternal health outcomes than white women. They're three times more likely to die during pregnancy, and their babies are three times more likely to die before their first birthday than white infants.

**The statistics are heartbreaking.
But they're not inevitable.**



The Community Foundation's Fund for Women & Girls brought together community partners closest to this problem to improve maternal health outcomes. With

founding support from the Vincent J. Coates Foundation, the Black Maternal Health Initiative (BMHI) united doulas, Black mothers, Planned Parenthood, Bridgeport Prosper, March of Dimes, and other community organizations to transform maternal care across the county.

"The Community Foundation has said, 'You know what, we know that there's not one solution,'" said Ayesha R. Clarke, Executive Director of BMHI partner Health Equity Solutions. "'What are ways you can work together to achieve system-level change?'"

DIGGING DOWN TO THE ROOT CAUSES

BMHI explored what was driving racial disparities in care and what it would take to change it.

"We talked about implicit bias," said Lutonya Russell-Humes, the Community Foundation's Vice President of Grants and Programs. "That was a big one." It can fuel distrust of the healthcare system and cause some Black women to delay maternal care.

Partnering with the Connecticut Hospital Association, BMHI developed practitioner training to help ensure mothers are heard, respected, and receive equitable care. The program helps clinicians and hospital staff recognize implicit bias, understand its effects on patients' health, and address it.

BMHI also expanded access to trusted, quality maternal care through DoulaTogether, with additional training provided by the Community Health Workers Association of Connecticut. While doula care is often perceived as cost-prohibitive, DoulaTogether is committed to supporting mothers regardless of income or ZIP code.

CULTIVATING A PATH TO A NEW FUTURE

That commitment can make it difficult for doulas to support their families. BMHI helped them create sustainable business plans and advocated for Medicaid coverage of doula care.

Connecticut passed legislation providing that coverage in 2023, creating a new challenge: greater demand for already scarce doula services. BMHI responded by expanding access to affordable doula training in Bridgeport. The program has already graduated 10 doulas, with another 10 on track to complete the program in fall 2026.

The work is already transforming maternal care in the county, but it's just the beginning. "The Community Foundation's goal is never to do this work in perpetuity," said Russell-Humes. "It is to help build the capacity and infrastructure needed for the work to become sustainable and continue beyond our initial investment."



Support healthier futures for families:
FCCFoundation.org/Healthy26



The Black Maternal Health Initiative matters because it refuses to treat poor outcomes as inevitable. It forces us to ask harder questions about where, exactly, systems break down.

DR. LINDA BARRY

Associate Director, Health
Disparities Institute
UConn Health





FOOD SECURITY FUND

Feeding **Neighbors, Funding Change**

ADDRESSING
FOOD INSECURITY
THROUGH RELIEF,
AWARENESS,
AND ADVOCACY





Even in a community like ours, home to some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the nation, there are families who don't know where they will get their next meal.

Already, 11,192 Fairfield County residents have lost their SNAP benefits as a result of federal changes, at a time when a modestly priced meal in Connecticut costs about 50 percent more than SNAP covers.

Local food pantries are witnessing the effects of these realities, welcoming neighbors who never before needed help but have been thrust into crisis.

"We knew this food-access crisis wasn't a one-time event," said Lutonya Russell-Humes, the Community Foundation's Vice President of Grants and Programs. "It was going to get worse, not better."

TAKING ACTION

Anticipating a deepening crisis in the region, the Community Foundation took bold action by establishing the Fairfield County Food Security Fund in January 2026. Modeled on the Foundation's rapid-response COVID-19 Resiliency Fund, the Food Security Fund delivers easy-to-apply grants of up to \$10,000 within three to four weeks to small organizations that quietly make big differences in their communities. To date, the fund has supported 18 organizations with \$125,000 in grants.

That money is helping neighbors care for neighbors. A Bridgeport farmer is able to provide free produce from sustainable plots. Community college students can take home groceries with no paperwork beyond a signature. An LGBTQ community organization can maintain a pantry for clients in need.

These rapid-response dollars have helped frontline groups erase wait lists and keep shelves stocked. Yet charity alone is not the end goal.

"This is a policy problem," said Elaine Mintz, the Community Foundation's Senior Vice President of Strategy and External Relations. "It's not a resource problem."

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

The Community Foundation is partnering with state food advocates to push for systemic changes such as free school breakfast for all Connecticut students.

That advocacy helped build momentum for legislation passed this year establishing universal school breakfasts statewide, helping to ensure all students have the nourishment they need to learn and succeed.

As the program mobilizes donors, partners, and policymakers, Community Foundation President and CEO Mendi Blue Paca has elevated the issue nationally, prompting coverage from TV stations and publications like *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* and *Inside Philanthropy*.

This education is an essential part of the solution. By spotlighting hunger in the shadows of Fairfield County's prosperity, the Community Foundation is bringing the community together around a shared goal of ensuring all neighbors have food on their tables.



**Support rapid response to
meet urgent needs:
FCCFoundation.org/Food26**



Food insecurity in our communities has only increased with rising food prices and the uncertainty of SNAP benefits. I am happy to donate to the Food Security Fund because it will take many partners to ensure healthy, affordable food is available to every person living in Fairfield County, especially our vulnerable children, families, and seniors.

SUE MIRZA

Board Member & Advisor, Filling in the Blanks



Donors

**TOGETHER, WE'RE CREATING A FUTURE WHERE EVERYONE IN
FAIRFIELD COUNTY CAN THRIVE. THANK YOU!**

Gifts noted were made from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

Deidre Aarons	Susan Barksdale	Boston Foundation	Eleanor Carley
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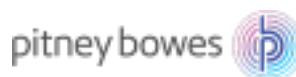
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A Look Back at Fiscal Year 2026

The organization experienced growth in net assets as a result of robust investment returns and increased philanthropic support. This financial growth reflects both prudent stewardship of invested funds and the confidence of our donors. While grantmaking and program expenditures remained a significant use of resources, the combination of investment gains and contribution revenue resulted in an overall increase in net assets.

Explore investment options for donors: FCCFoundation.org/Investments26

JULY 1, 2025, TO JUNE 30, 2026

Financial Statement*

	FY2026	FY2025**
Revenues		
Contributions and Other Revenue	\$ 17,925,958	\$ 15,927,760
Investment Income, Net of Expenses	27,802,889	25,592,475
Total Revenue	\$ 45,728,847	\$ 41,520,235
Expenses		
Program Expenses	\$ 29,598,289	\$ 29,207,674
Other Expenses	2,273,026	2,780,715
Total Expenses	\$ 31,871,315	\$ 31,988,389
Change in Net Assets	\$ 13,857,532	\$ 9,531,846
Assets		
Cash and Other Assets	\$ 1,187,155	\$ 514,918
Investments	303,843,233	289,971,883
Operating Lease Right of Use	650,127	864,806
Total Assets	\$ 305,680,515	\$ 291,351,607
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Grants Payable & Accounts Payable	\$ 968,680	\$ 826,040
Operating Lease Liability	803,828	1,053,327
Agency Funds & Other Liabilities	10,841,714	10,203,829
Total Liabilities	12,614,222	12,083,196
Net Assets	293,066,293	279,268,411
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 305,680,515	\$ 291,351,607

* Unaudited; excludes nonprofit endowment funds.

**FY25 figures have been audited.

For a complete copy of our audited financial statements and tax returns (IRS Form 990), please visit FCCFoundation.org/Financial or contact our Finance Department at (203) 750-3200.

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