



NEW CANAAN
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Photo Caption: Young Philanthropists with Community Foundation Executive Director Cynthia Gorey.

Jamie Schlim, Cynthia Gorey, Danielle Balzano, Hannah Einstein, Jack Barker. Back row: Morgan Sturm, Nicole Curto, Will Gruseke, and Nick Smith

Young Philanthropists Award Grants of \$17,000

The culmination of the New Canaan Community Foundation's Young Philanthropists program is their spring grant awards ceremony. Attendees at this youth philanthropy event heard from guest speaker Dr. David Levinson, the President of Norwalk Community College. Students then presented grant checks for \$17,000 to selected local nonprofit organizations providing educational services for low income children in grades pre-K through Eight.

Cynthia Gorey, Community Foundation Executive Director, said "the Young Philanthropists program is a unique educational opportunity for high school students in New Canaan and an additional grant-making resource for local non-profits." It was established in 2006 as an endowed fund at the Foundation, and students first made grants in 2008. Since then, the group has made 74 grants in a variety of program areas, totaling approximately \$85,000. Many

students participate for several years during high school so the curriculum changes annually to keep the subject matter fresh and engaging

“It was a privilege to work with this great group of 36 high school students this year, up from 27 last year,” said Board member Susan Boston. The group meets once a month during the school year in a different non-profit location each time and hears from leaders of each organization to learn about the services they provide to our community. This year, they met at the Library, the Outback Teen Center, Schoolhouse Apartments, St. Mark’s Church Youth Room, Silver Hill Hospital, Police Department, the Historical Society, and at Waveny Care Center.

The curriculum features guest speakers from area organizations to explore a theme for the year. The latest focus was “The Other Fairfield County” and students learned about key issues affecting our less advantaged neighbors: Neighbors Link Stamford works to improve the lives of immigrants in our community; Lone Pine Foundation, a local corporate funder focuses on supporting high quality programs in education and youth development; Norwalk ACTS, a diverse partnership of over 100 civic leaders, educators, and organizations works collectively to achieve the mission of enriching and improving the lives and futures of all Norwalk’s children; and AmeriCares Free Clinics, provides free health care to low income uninsured patients in Norwalk and Stamford.

To help the students learn firsthand how difficult it is to raise awareness and money for a cause, the group conducted two fundraisers: a letter writing appeal campaign and a special event fundraiser with exercise classes at Oxygen Fitness in February. These efforts raised over \$12,000 and were supplemented by a significant matching gift from generous local resident Claude Bernstein.

The students decided as a group to focus this year’s grants on educational programming for low income children in Preschool through Grade 8. The students then worked collaboratively to determine which of the 29 requests (up from 19 last year) for \$77,000 (up from \$40,000) to support with a grant. Members learned how to make decisions as a group, democratically, taking different viewpoints into account, ultimately awarding \$17,000 in eleven grants. Awards were presented to Childcare Learning Centers, Domus Kids, Family Centers, Horizons Student Enrichment Program, Inspirica, Mercy Learning Center, Neighbors Link, New Beginnings Family Academy, Open Door Shelter, Stepping Stones Museum for Children, and the United Way’s Imagination Library Literacy program.

Community Foundation Board President Leo Karl III concluded by noting that the job of parents or teachers is to inspire kids and lead by example, and that early nurturing of children’s giving instincts can have lasting impact. A 2013 study by the University of Indiana of kids between the ages of 8 and 19 found that parents play an important role in raising children who become charitable adults. Among the key findings is that talking to children about charity has a greater impact on their giving habits than role modeling alone. Another study by *Do Something* (an online volunteering website for teens) found that while the influence of friends on children’s

volunteering increases as they age, family is still more influential than friends, even among high school students.

Mr. Karl ended with this quote by noted author Susan Crites Price, “Children are born with a conscience, just not with the wisdom or experience to apply it. That’s where parenting comes in”. On behalf of the Community Foundation, he expressed gratitude to the parents who have supported the kids in this program. Mr. Karl continued, “Being charitable starts with remembering to think beyond yourself and about other people and having the tools to act on that awareness in a way that has meaningful impact. This group of students has started on that path.”

For more information about the Community Foundation and their Young Philanthropists program, please visit www.newcanaancf.org .