Engaging millennials in philanthropy through our NEW Rising Professional Advisors Council

It’s no secret that millennials, considered the largest generation since Baby Boomers, are gaining leadership positions and will be strong influences on all sectors of society including philanthropy. For these reasons and more, the Community Foundation was thrilled to establish the Rising Professional Advisors Council (RPAC), a group of enthusiastic, career-focused young adults who share an interest in learning about local philanthropy to enrich their own lives, as well as add value to their professional services with clients. Victoria McGruder, financial advisor, was first introduced to Fairfield County’s Community Foundation at a law firm’s Women in Philanthropy event. And the timing was perfect since she was moving to Fairfield County and seeking opportunities for community involvement.

Victoria was immediately impressed by FCCF’s Fund for Women & Girls’ programs. She then learned about FCCF’s new Rising Professional Advisors Council, which she saw as a perfect opportunity to weave together her personal and professional philanthropic interests. “It’s been amazing for us to discover how many of these young people are already involved with local nonprofits, either sitting on boards or volunteering in other ways,” shares Nancy Tartaglia, FCCF’s Planned Giving & Donor Stewardship Manager and liaison for RPAC. “As professional advisors, they have opportunities to discuss philanthropy with their clients, and we want to make sure they have the knowledge and tools to effectively have those conversations.”

To learn more about Fairfield County’s Community Foundation’s Professional Advisors Councils, visit FCCFoundation.org

The Planet Fuel Charitable Fund

Using a Donor Advised Fund to empower a new generation of environmental stewards

When Fairfield resident Amy Barnouw launched Planet Fuel, a line of organic juices for teens and tweens, she knew she wanted to do more than create a healthy product. She also wanted to empower young people to create positive social change. “It’s a seamless way to be philanthropic,” says Barnouw. “You can literally write a check and hit the ground running the next day.” Through her fund, Barnouw believes this is an ideal way to make an impact without having to manage investments, or file for tax status and other back-office work.

The Planet Fuel Charitable Fund has already started awarding environmental conservation grants. It’s also tapped into the passion of young people, forming a Student Advisory Council. The council engages teens to become environmental leaders. The teens guide local and national grantmaking and are organizing a film series to raise community awareness for environmental issues.

According to Barnouw, her fund is already making an impact “because Fairfield County’s Community Foundation is more than just an investment vehicle. It’s a philanthropic partner, connecting funders with all kinds of interests.”

“The Community Foundation is a place where you can come in with a dream, and expand it in ways you didn’t even know were possible,” says Barnouw. “You’re part of a team.”

To learn more about establishing a Donor Advised Fund, contact Development Director Kristy Jelenik at 203.750.3211 or KJelenik@FCCFoundation.org

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In a remarkable outpouring, donors with all kinds of interests participated in Giving Day, powered by Fairfield County’s Community Foundation. Stamford-based Future 5 reported that its first gift of the day was from a former youth participant. Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield, reached its goal to raise funds to provide a year’s worth of bread for its families. And 10-year-old Aiden from Fairfield made a $10 donation to Fairfield County Children’s Choir because he loves music.

“This incredible day is not just about raising money,” said Juanita James, President & CEO of Fairfield County’s Community Foundation. “So many lives are touched and places strengthened as a result of Giving Day. People all over the region are learning about programs in their own hometowns. And nonprofits are leveraging the Giving Day campaign to build communication, fundraising and tech skills that will help them beyond Giving Day.” James continued, “Increasing local philanthropy is our business, daily focus and passion. It’s been a joy for all of us at the Community Foundation to organize this momentous effort for the past four years with champion sponsor Bank of America. Together we thrive!”

Thank you for supporting our Community Impact Fund which fuels Giving Day. A report on Giving Day key findings, statistics and stories can be found at FCCFoundation.org/research-publications/all-research-publications/
**Thriving as a Young Adult**

by Surline Jolicoeur, former Thrive by 25 Youth Ambassador

I’ve learned that there are two defining attributes in life that help determine your trajectory: patience when you have nothing and attitude when you have everything. And seizing an opportunity to learn and advance can mean all the difference. For me, one of these defining moments occurred when I became a member of Fairfield County’s Community Foundation’s Thrive by 25 Youth Ambassador Program.

While I recently received my Bachelor’s Degree from Central Connecticut State University, I couldn’t find a meaningful job and needed guidance, as well as employment experience in order to attract employers. Through the Youth Ambassador Program, I played a key role in organizing our Youth Summit at Sacred Heart University, gaining valuable skills and experience in social media marketing, communications and strategic event planning. A few months later, I jumped on an opportunity to represent the Youth Ambassador Program at a United Way event for youth and young adults. The event was an enthralling experience that further cemented my conviction that I wanted to work with the youth and nonprofit programs. I soon learned of a job opening at the United Way and quickly submitted my resume — complete with all the skills I developed during my time as Youth Ambassador.

And now I am the Coordinator of the Youth Volunteer Corps Department at United Way of Western Connecticut. I get to not only work side by side with youth to elevate their minds, their spirit and cultivate their appetite for servicing their community, but I also get to bring forth inventive ideas and strategies to the United Way brand. Life tends to come full circle when you seize the opportunities presented to you and broaden your horizons.

“I encourage young people to explore opportunities, like the one I had with the Community Foundation, to serve as a blueprint to defining your interests, gaining skills and learning from valuable experiences.”

Your generosity helps young women like Marie and Naomi thrive. Thank you! Learn more at FCCFoundation.org/community-impact/fund-women-girls-new/
With your help, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence continues to be the place where organizations “go to grow”

When Reverend Cass Shaw became President & CEO of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, she knew she would be taking on a challenge.

In a city where poverty and trauma touch many lives, the council brings together a wide network of community partners to feed the hungry, support youth in crisis and much more.

To be effective, Shaw recognized that she would need to develop new skills as a nonprofit leader and help her board and staff grow to ensure greater impact. She had a strong resource to turn to for support: the Center for Nonprofit Excellence.

Shaw believes the power of the Center for Nonprofit Excellence is twofold: it provides resources and fosters relationships. It’s a combination that can be vitally important for nonprofits that are working with limited resources to make an impact where it’s needed most.

Shaw has encouraged her Board of Directors to attend workshops on governance and several of her staff have participated in essential skills building trainings.

“It’s basically my go-to place,” says Shaw. “I know that I am a better leader, making smarter decisions and moving this organization forward because of the resources I’m receiving.”

Thank you for supporting the Center for Nonprofit Excellence. Your gifts make this work possible. Learn more at FCCFoundation.org/CNE

Nurturing Seeds of Opportunity at the Annual Fund for Women & Girls Luncheon

Year after year the Fund for Women & Girls’ Luncheon draws hundreds of passionate supporters to share an afternoon of inspiration, celebration and joy. On April 20th at the Hyatt Regency Greenwich, 500+ attendees celebrated the ways the fund has helped women and girls reach their full potential and become powerful changemakers in our communities over the last 19 years.

The outpouring of generosity from the luncheon benefits the Family Economic Security Program (FESP) at Housatonic Community College (HCC) in Bridgeport, CT. This model initiative provides women the tools they need to persist through college, become self-sufficient, have marketable careers and provide sustainable support for their families.

Director of the Fund for Women & Girls Tricia Hyacinth said, “We know from our own research that graduation rates in low-income communities depend on access to education, availability of financial resources and life skills training.”

Tricia continued, “The FESP model encompasses components beyond scholarships and financial aid. We work with women to develop strong social skills and a solid understanding of finances. We guide them through educational decisions that will lead to meaningful and marketable careers.”

FESP students, Marie Bedoya and Naomi Gomez, bravely shared their stories as well. Marie is a single mother who was raised in a family with low expectations for higher education or a meaningful career. She faced incredible financial challenges, yet found hope and help through FESP. “My FESP scholarship wasn’t just a check in the mail. It was a program of encouragement, assistance and real-life education.”

At 16 years old, Naomi along with five of her brothers and sisters, were forced to raise themselves after their father was deported back to the Dominican Republic and their mother chose to join him. Naomi attempted to succeed in college, but failed classes while contributing to her household responsibilities. Her determination to live a better life led her back to HCC, where she was introduced to the FESP program.

Naomi said, “FESP has helped me and my peers with so much. I feel confident enough now to be able to take the tools I’ve learned, and apply them to the rest of my education journey and professional life.”

Marie and Naomi graduate from HCC this spring with plans to pursue higher education degrees. They credit FESP, and especially the program donors, for helping them achieve their dreams.

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Victoria McGruder, a financial advisor for The Erdman Group, says “Being a part of RPAC certainly sets you apart from other professionals. It gives you the tools, resources and network to be an advocate for your community and to best serve your clients.”

For these reasons and more, the Community Foundation at a law firm’s Victoria McGruder, financial advisor, was introduced to Fairfield County’s Community Foundation at a law firm’s Women in Philanthropy event. And the timing was perfect since she was moving to Fairfield County and seeking opportunities for community involvement.

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Fairfield Theatre Company to celebrate the launch of the 4th annual Fairfield County’s Giving Day

Nearly 200 community members, nonprofit staff members, business, town and city leaders gathered at the Fairfield Theatre Company to celebrate the launch of the 4th annual Fairfield County’s Giving Day.

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To promote philanthropy as a means to create change in Fairfield County, focusing on innovative and collaborative solutions to critical issues impacting the community.