

The Community Fund of Darien awards \$600,000 in grants to agencies

Written by The Darien Times

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The Community Fund of Darien has distributed over \$600,000 to agencies serving Darien, Norwalk and Stamford during 2009-10.

Also, in the past year, the Community Fund has distributed an additional \$3,600 through its "Touch a Life Fund," \$17,660 in small grants, \$42,000 for key initiatives including Aging in Place and the Fairfield County Collaborative Fund for Affordable Housing, \$5,000 granted by the Youth Community Fund and \$23,000 for donor-designated contributions.

Through its annual Allocations Process, the following agencies will receive 2009-2010 grants.

Youth mental health: Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut; Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County; Kids in Crisis; Liberation Programs/Darien Family & Youth Options.

Family strengthening: Family & Children's Agency; Family Centers; Family ReEntry; YWCA of Darien/Norwalk.

Elderly support: Darien Red Cross; ElderHouse; Visiting Nurse & Hospice Care of Southwestern Connecticut.

Youth/after-school programs: The Depot Teen Center; DOMUS/Trailblazers Academy; George Washington Carver Center; Yerwood Center

Food and shelter: Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County; Shelter for the Homeless.

Crisis: Domestic Violence Crisis Center; Sexual Assault Crisis and Education Center.

Special needs: Abilis; Laurel House; STAR, Lighting the Way.

Self-sufficiency: CTE; St. Luke's LifeWorks; Women's Business Development Center

Broad community services: AmeriCares Free Clinic in Norwalk; Housing Development Fund.

The Community Fund of Darien is working with these agencies to assure the availability of critical health and human services to those in need in Darien, Norwalk and Stamford.

This fund distribution is the culmination of two months of work by over 50 allocations volunteers who reviewed applications and made site visits with agency staff and volunteers. After thorough analysis, discussion and deliberation, these representatives came together to thoughtfully determine where donors' dollars would be wisely and responsibly spent to provide critical services.

"Few people have the time to thoroughly review agencies before making decisions about where to contribute their charitable dollars for greatest effectiveness and impact," said Bob Wells, president of the Community Fund of Darien. "Everyone who gives to the Community Fund of Darien can rest assured that their contribution is going to make a positive difference for the community."

In addition, over \$17,000 in small grant funding has been awarded to SoundWaters for its science education program for middle school youth, the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk Diaper Co-Op, Christian Community Action and the Collaborative Alliance.

Through the Human Services Planning Council of the Community Fund, money has been provided for Aging in Place, a key initiative helping Darien seniors live independently. The fund also provides money for LISC, the managing agency for the Fairfield County Collaborative Fund for Affordable Housing.

The Community Fund also provides emergency grants through its "Touch a Life Fund" to help Darien residents through difficult times. In 2008-09, the Community Fund provided over \$3,000 in financial assistance for identified clients of Darien's Department of Social Services to pay for such needs as heating oil, electricity, child care, rent, medical and dental care.

The new Youth Community Fund consisting of Darien public and private high school students researched needs and agencies in our community and with a focus on food and shelter, granted \$2,500 each to the Shelter for the Homeless and New Covenant House of Hospitality.

For more information on how to help, contact the Community Fund of Darien office at 655-8775 or visit communityfunddarien.org.