

theSteward

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Covid-19 Rapid Response Grants Provide Needed Support throughout the Northwest Corner

In March of 2020, Covid-19 arrived in Northwest Connecticut. The threat of illness and the necessary precautions to keep residents safe crashed like a wave into our communities, engulfing every aspect of life.

Schools closed suddenly, cutting off low-income children from free and reduced-fee breakfasts and lunches. Parents, especially those working low-income service-oriented jobs, were laid off or furloughed, awaiting delayed unemployment benefits.

"We have an increase in demand due to unemployment with dwindling food supplies. Staff have worked tirelessly, from fear, to routine, to great concern as the economy plummets. Our fundraising is challenged to maintain operations for those in need."

Soup kitchens and food pantries scrambled to provide for increased demand, while meeting social distancing requirements, increased disinfecting demands, and personal protective equipment requirements. Donations from food distributors waned as panicked shoppers stocked their home pantries.

"We have an increase in demand due to unemployment with dwindling food supplies. Staff have worked tirelessly, from fear, to routine, to great concern as the economy plummets. Our fundraising is challenged to maintain operations for those in need," said Deidre DiCara of FISH, one of more than 30 local nonprofits that received Community Foundation COVID-19 Rapid Response grants to help meet a growing need for food.



Volunteers for Food Rescue US organize food boxes during the Spring Covid-19 outbreak. Food Rescue US received a Covid-19 Rapid Response Grant to purchase food and prepared meals for distribution to local food pantries.

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\$180,000 in Scholarships Awarded to Local Students

In 2020 the Community Foundation awarded more than \$180,000 in scholarships and awards to 189 local students for the 2020-2021 academic year. Students are working toward careers, including healthcare, engineering, and the arts.

"It is with great honor that I accept this award. Thank you."
— Nathan Versari

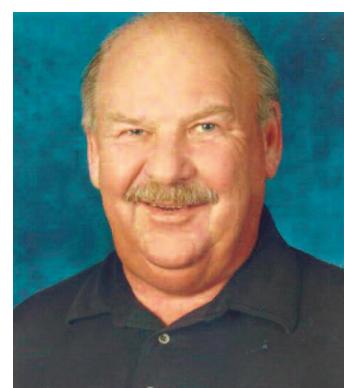
Scholarships and academic awards are made possible by Northwest CT Community Foundation Funds, established by generous individuals and families.



Nathan Versari (left) of Torrington received the Donald F. and Norma K. Mougenot Scholarship. Marin Montoya (right) of Canaan received the Frances H. Ducci Scholarship and the Health Care Auxiliary Scholarship.

View all scholarship awards at www.northwestcf.org/2020scholarships

Cara and Carl Muller Give Back to their Hometown



Carl Muller

In early 2020, the Northwest Corner lost a friend, a business owner, and a champion of local community. Carl Muller passed away at his home in Florida, a loss for all who knew him and for many who never met him, but who benefitted from his generosity.

For Carl Muller and his wife, Cara, there was no place like home. And, home no matter where life took them, was Torrington—the town where Carl grew up, where he and Cara built several successful businesses, and where they raised their two children.

Cara and Carl met while attending New England College in New Hampshire. The two married in 1971, and opened the first of many successful businesses in Torrington. The Spring Tree Lounge on South Main Street welcomed locals for food and libations in the early 1970s.

With their first child on the way, Cara and Carl sold The Spring Tree Lounge and joined the True Value co-op, opening Carl's True Value on North Elm Street. Shortly after, they established Carl's Carpet One on Winsted Road.

Over decades of managing businesses in Torrington, the Mullers regularly donated to local school PTOs, Cub Scouts, the Torrington-Winsted Rotary and Fire Department fundraisers, and supported the Community Kitchen of Torrington.

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John and Cynthia Reznick – Doing Well and Inspiring Good



John and Cynthia Reznick established the John and Cynthia Reznick Fund.

John and Cynthia Reznick built their lives in Northwest Connecticut. John, a Torrington High School graduate, began working in the electrical distribution industry shortly after high school. Throughout a 40 year career, he worked his way up from sales and warehouse positions to sales management, vice president, and ultimately to Regional President of U.S. Electrical Services.

Cynthia, a Winsted native, taught Spanish and English at The Gilbert School and later worked at a local oncology office as a medical assistant.

"Together we have made a nice living over the years," said John. "I never felt like I was working."

"Doing well financially is one measure of success. Another measure is looking beyond yourself to the needs of others."

The Reznicks have supported many local nonprofit fundraisers and appeals, including gifts to the Warner Theatre, LARC, and the Northwest CT Community Foundation, including the **Cancer Care Fund of the Litchfield Hills**, the **Community Leadership Fund**, and the **Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund**. They have contributed to fundraisers related to hunger, to those with intellectual and physical disabilities, to the arts, and to homeless animals.

"You see people around you who are passionate about a cause. They don't have to step up and help, but they do, and so much good comes out of their efforts. It's inspiring, and it's contagious."

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Cara and Carl Muller Give Back to their Hometown

The Mullers have been in business in Torrington for more than 40 years. "The town has always supported us in our businesses. And, we have always supported local town fundraisers," said Carl. "They need the support."

In May of 2004, the Mullers learned just how supportive their community could be. Late in the evening, their home caught fire. Staff and volunteer firefighters ensured that the Mullers were safe and worked through the night to contain the blaze.

The next morning at 9:00a.m. firefighters handed Carl an envelope. Inside was almost \$300 in cash collected from the Germania Club.

"The people and organizations in this town are gracious and generous," said Carl. "The community has always supported us. It's time to give back to the community."

In 2006, The Mullers established the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Cara and Carl Muller Fund for Community Support**. Through their donor-advised fund, the Mullers supported projects and causes that reflect their love of Torrington.

"The people and organizations in this town are gracious and generous. The community has always supported us. It's time to give back to the community."

The fund has supported the Torrington Parks and Recreation Department's Pageant of Drums, an event that invites residents to watch local drum corps, including Connecticut Hurricanes Drum Corps, St. Peter's Drum Corps, and the Torrington High School Band, which will perform in Fuessenich Park.

A recent grant to the Torrington Historical Society enabled the purchase of a book of more than 80 historical photographs of Torrington storefronts, events and streetscapes from 1915-1930. The photos were taken by Charles Harris, a sign painter of that time.

When Carl passed away in June of 2020, family and friends continued Carl's legacy of generosity by making more than \$3,000 in gifts to the Cara and Carl Muller Fund for Community Support.

"Carl's passing is sadly felt by all of us who knew him," said Northwest CT Community Foundation president Guy Rovezzi. "The Mullers' affable nature and giving spirit embody the true meaning of community goodwill. A visit to their home immediately reveals that all who enter are treated like family. Carl's and Cara's warmth, exemplified through the admirable qualities of kindness and compassion found in their loving children, Corey and Erin, is a true reflection of their legacy. For the Mullers, you can make others happy by being generous, but—when all is said and done—the happiness you make is mostly your own."

"There are plenty of areas in the world that need assistance," said Cara. "But there is nothing like giving back to the people in your own community."

To make a gift to the Cara and Carl Muller Fund for Community Support, visit www.northwestcf.org/donate



A photo from *Through the Lens*, a book of Torrington store fronts, events and streetscapes from 1915-1930. The Torrington Historical Society purchased the book through a grant from the Cara and Carl Muller Fund for Community Support.

Photo credit: Unidentified Boy at Park Theatre, Torrington Ca. 1915
Collection of the Torrington Historical Society

What matters to you? Tell us at northwestcf.org/contact

Northwest Corner Gives Raises more than \$630,000 for Local Nonprofits

By late April 2020, the effects of Covid-19 could be felt throughout Northwest Connecticut. It was becoming clear that nonprofit-business as usual was not going to be usual for a long time. Hundreds of nonprofits—assisting families facing homelessness, providing therapies and services to individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities, assisting those recovering from substance abuse—wondered how they were going to survive.

Nonprofits faced lost revenue from cancelled fundraising events, coupled with expenses related to purchasing technology and equipment needed to enable distance work and distance programming, and providing personal protective equipment for staff and volunteers. At the same time, they faced an increase in the need for their services.

In response, the Community Foundation launched Northwest Corner Gives, a crowdsourced giving platform created by the Community Foundation to help local nonprofits raise funds to meet the needs of operating during Covid-19. The Community Foundation posted nonprofit fundraising goals, and provided staff and volunteers with a communications tool kit to help them reach their supporters.



Through **Northwest Corner Gives**, the Community Foundation guaranteed a grant for 50 percent of each nonprofit goal, and then matched dollar-for-dollar every gift until every nonprofit goal was achieved.

Northwest Corner Gives ran from June 15th-July 31st and provided \$635,280 to local nonprofits, making possible renovations that provide for social distancing and healthier air-flow in facilities serving clients; closing



EdAdvance staff member prepares summer program materials for students. EdAdvance raised more than \$20,000 through Northwest Corner Gives gifts and matches, providing for virtual and in-person summer care for local students.

the gap on fundraising short falls created by cancelled events and performances; affording the technology needed to enable staff and volunteers to provide services and programming remotely; purchasing personal protective equipment, and keeping food pantries stocked.

[View all grants awarded through Northwest Corner Gives at \[www.northwestcf.org/northwestcornergives\]\(http://www.northwestcf.org/northwestcornergives\)](http://www.northwestcf.org/northwestcornergives)

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Covid-19 Rapid Response Grants Provide Needed Support throughout the Northwest Corner

Rapid Response Grants to the Rescue

The Community Foundation responded quickly placing on-hold existing grant cycles and establishing the **Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund** through Community Foundation donor-advised and discretionary funds, and through gifts from public and private foundations, and local individuals, groups and families.

View gifts to the Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund at www.northwestcornergives.org

Throughout March and April local nonprofits providing for basic needs received \$110,470 in Rapid Response Grants. Grants were applied for and awarded on a rolling basis to ensure nonprofit needs were met as they arose.

Rapid Response Grants provided for the most basic of immediate needs for those in distress—rent payments, food, infant diapers and formula, utilities, medication, and child care services.

"Your grant allowed us to provide much needed food and essentials to over 90 families," said Darin Dodge of Veterans of Foreign Wars.

[View all Covid-19 Rapid Response Grants at \[www.northwestcf.org/Covid19\]\(http://www.northwestcf.org/Covid19\)](http://www.northwestcf.org/Covid19)

Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund

In March 2020, the Community Foundation established the **Northwest Corner Gives: Rapid Response Fund**. The Fund made possible rapid and steady grant awards to nonprofit organizations working on the front lines of response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provided 75 percent of Northwest Corner Gives campaign goals.

The fund continues to support nonprofits with grants for operating expenses, programs that can operate remotely to comply with current physical distancing restrictions, and the technology equipment needed to facilitate remote work for employees, serve clients remotely, and other COVID-19 related needs as they arise.

[To make a gift to the Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund, visit \[www.northwestcf.org/donate\]\(http://www.northwestcf.org/donate\)](http://www.northwestcf.org/donate)

Be What's Possible — Join the Legacy Society

The Community Foundation established the Legacy Society to recognize individuals and couples who have made provisions in their estate plans to provide a gift to the Community Foundation for the benefit of their community.

These gifts take the form of bequests by naming the Community Foundation not only in a will or trust, but also in a charitable remainder trust, gifts of life insurance, or any other type of charitable planned gift.

For people who want to create a legacy beyond their lifetime, the Legacy Society ensures that their charitable dollars are used in the way they intended.

If you have made arrangements in your will, trust, or other deferred gift mechanism or if you would like to learn more about joining the Legacy Society, Contact Bradford Hoar, VP of Philanthropic Services at bhoar@northwestcf.org or (860) 626-1245 for more information.



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John and Cynthia Reznick – Doing Well and Inspiring Good

In 2016, the Reznicks retired. They sat down with their professional advisor to review their estate planning. After planning for gifts to their family members and close friends, they decided to give back to Northwest Connecticut, to continue to support the nonprofits in the community they love.

"Northwest Connecticut is a beautiful place to live," said Cynthia. "There are so many places we love to visit; there is no other place I would want to live. But like many places, there is a lot of need."

"There are people who need a safety net. There are people who, through no fault of their own, may need some assistance in taking care of themselves."

Through their estate planning, the Reznicks established the Northwest CT Community Foundation **John and Cynthia Reznick Fund**. The bequest, a field-of-interest fund, will benefit local causes making a difference in the Northwest Corner.

"There are people who need a safety net. There are people who, through no fault of their own, may need some assistance in taking care of themselves."

"I consider myself to be very fortunate," said John. "I worked hard, but I had a lot of good fortune. I had a lot of good mentors over the years. I watched how successful people behaved. Part of financial success is giving back. Doing well financially is one measure of success. Another measure is looking beyond yourself to the needs of others."

FOUNDATION FOCUS

Community Foundation Welcomes New Board Members



Emily Dalton is co-founder of Jack Black LLC, ranked as the #1 prestige men's grooming brand in the U.S., outselling competitors by maintaining a clear focus on simple to use, multi-functional products and a unique, masculine brand personality that resonates with men. Jack Black is sold at retailers throughout the U.S. including Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, Sephora, Ulta and Bloomingdale's.

After graduating with an MBA from the University of Texas at Austin, Ms. Dalton spent her early career in finance, followed by a decade in brand marketing and product development at companies such as Johnson & Johnson, L'Oréal and Mary Kay.

Having retired from Jack Black in 2019, Ms. Dalton lives in Litchfield, with her husband and two daughters. She has served on the Board of Trustees and Advisory Council for Susan B. Anthony Project, as well as the Board of Trustees for the Oliver Wolcott Library, where she served as President from 2016-2018, and Chair of the Festival of Trees fundraising event for 2011-2013 and 2015-2016. Emily was the first recipient of the OWL Exceptional Leadership Award in 2018.



Rod Pleasants is president of McIver Morgan Interior Design, a full service firm specializing in all areas and facets of high-end interior design. The firm, based in New York City, focuses on Manhattan interior design, including brownstone, and townhouse renovation.

As a patron of culture and the arts, Mr. Pleasants has served on the Board of Directors of the New York Theater Workshop and the Royal Oak Foundation, the American affiliate of the British National Trust. He currently serves on the boards of Hollister House and the Gunn Memorial Library, serving twice as President of the Library's Board of Trustees. He is also active in the Washington Art Association.

Also Online...

Community Foundation Presents Nonprofit Education Series: Powering Through COVID-19

The Northwest CT Community Foundation in conjunction with Community Foundation LEAP instructors, Danosky & Associates, presented Powering Through COVID-19, a series of workshop webinars created specifically to address the current challenges facing nonprofits in Northwest Connecticut during this difficult time.

[View the webinars at www.northwestcf.org/non-profit-education](http://www.northwestcf.org/non-profit-education)

Women & Girls Fund Supports Child Care

The Northwest CT Community Foundation Women & Girls Fund has awarded \$5,000 in grants in support of two local child care centers that are working to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 at their facilities.

[Learn more at www.northwestcf.org/womenandgirls/grants](http://www.northwestcf.org/womenandgirls/grants)

Women & Girls Celebrate the Centennial of Women's Suffrage

On October 29th, the Women & Girls Fund hosted a virtual event with best-selling author Anne Sharpsteen. The fun-filled event explored the scandalous and raucous politics surrounding Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for president of the United States.

[Learn more at www.northwestcf.org/womenandgirls](http://www.northwestcf.org/womenandgirls)

Neighbors Helping Neighbors documentary Highlights Volunteer First Responders

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a documentary short by award-winning writer, producer, Anne Makepeace that offers a unique look into the extraordinary skills and services our local first responders provide. The film highlights the hard work, training and dedication of these courageous local men and women.

Watch *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* at

www.northwestcf.org/neighbors-helping-neighbors



33 East Main Street
P.O. Box 1144
Torrington, CT 06790
www.northwestcf.org
T 860.626.1245
F 860.489.7517
info@northwestcf.org

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Questions or comments? Contact theSteward editor
Nicole Carlson Easley at neasley@northwestcf.org or 860.626.1245

Explore the benefits of a donor advised fund at northwestcf.org/donor-advised