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Sandy and David Slemmer protect our natural environment, care for our wildlife through their charitable fund

For years, Sandy Slemmer of Winsted enjoyed a career as a scientific researcher and later an information technology professional. She worked in programming and database management for several large corporations in New Jersey and Westchester County, New York. The work was creative and satisfying, but there was something missing. Sandy felt a daily pull toward the natural environment beyond the walls of the corporate park.

"I found that I kept looking out of the window," said Sandy. "If I was in a conference room, I'd position myself so I could look out the window; I just wanted to be outside."

When she could, Sandy and her husband, David, explored the Appalachian Trail in Kent, Great Mountain Forest in Falls Village, and the Housatonic River, and the surrounding areas. The two began to bicycle on the trails. They found new places, and began exploring the river with kayaks.

"It was quiet and peaceful," said Sandy. "And, we discovered places, environments, country roads that we wouldn't have visited in a car.

"When people feel stress, the ability to go for a hike or find a quiet spot makes a difference," she said. "People need natural areas. Maybe it's just a fishing pond, but taking the time to go out and go fishing or hiking—it's important."

Sandy and David Slemmer established The Elson-Slemmer Fund for the Environment to support the charitable, scientific and educational protection of the natural environment, including protection of its flora and fauna and the preservation of all species of wildlife with a focus on the Northwest Corner.

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Litchfield Community Center funds bring together generations for music, fitness, and fine arts

The Litchfield Community Center has served as a hub of Litchfield since it opened its doors in 2000. The Community Center offers constant and innumerable activities that bring the community together, including movies, fitness, arts classes and a teen center. Some of the most popular events at the Community Center are the music events inspired by former Litchfield resident Daniel North.

In the late 1990s, Mr. North was a frequent participant in music programs held at the Bantam Inn. After his wife's death, he and his friends would gather at the Inn on Sunday afternoons for jazz, swing and dixieland programs. Soon, Mr. North was hosting music sessions.

"It gave him a chance to overcome a lot of sadness after his wife died," said Berta Andrulis Mette, Litchfield Community Center Executive Director.

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Litchfield Community Center patrons enjoy Friday Feast & Dancing Feat.

Local and field experts present educational sessions for hundreds of nonprofits

Chuck Loring discusses effective nonprofit board development with nonprofit professionals from across the Northwest Corner.

The 2015 Nonprofit Education Series brought in local and field experts who provided guidance to hundreds of nonprofit professionals on the topics of improving board communications and management, and fostering positive relationships with donors.

On April 30, Anne Yurasek, Principal of Fio Partners, held a Critical Board Chair Communications roundtable. Ms. Yurasek discussed the importance of the relationship between an organization's CEO and its board chair and what makes for an effective board. Participants brainstormed strategies for success in managing critical conversations, such as giving and receiving feedback, delivering negative news and addressing disagreements and impasses.

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Keroden Endowed Fund, Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund ease pain and fear for accident victims

When accidents happen in the Northwest Corner, our highly skilled volunteer ambulance crews arrive in moments to provide emergency medical care and to safely transport patients to the nearest hospital.

In Bethlehem, the **Keroden Endowed Fund** has made that important job a little easier on volunteers and patients alike. The Bethlehem Volunteer Ambulance Association was awarded a grant from the Fund for the purchase of a Stryker Power Load system.

Bethlehem Ambulance volunteers load the Stryker Power Load system into an ambulance.

"An accident or medical emergency can happen to anyone at any time," said Jan Sardo, of the Bethlehem Ambulance Association.

"People come in all shapes and sizes. The Power Load system helps the crew safely and easily lift and draw the stretcher into the ambulance with less stress on the patient and the volunteers."

Watch the Bethlehem Ambulance crew showcase the Stryker Power Load stretcher at www.cfnwct.org/loader

The Keroden Endowed Fund was established in 2002 anonymously as a flexible discretionary fund that works to address ever-changing community needs.

In New Hartford, the **Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund** supported the New Hartford Volunteer Ambulance crew through a grant to purchase a True CPR coaching device, carrying case and two manikins (an adult and a child). The devices provide volunteers with real feedback about the effectiveness of their CPR compression rate and depth.

New Hartford Volunteer Ambulance members provided life-savings techniques using the True CPR coaching device to attendees of the recent New Hartford Day.

The devices work to improve ambulance volunteers' resuscitation skills as well as train hundreds of community members in emergency resuscitation.

"Emergency first responders are there for us 24/7," said an anonymous Community Foundation donor.

"They are our lifelines in an emergency, and they depend on and deserve the support of their community."

The Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund was established in 2004 through a bequest with the goal of supporting local nonprofit organizations with evolving needs for many years to come.

Great Mountain Forest educates current and future conservationists

In early 2015, Hans Carlson, Great Mountain Forest Director, reached out to the Community Foundation seeking support for technology upgrades for its weather data and internship program. The organization that manages 6,000 acres of forest in the Northwest Corner, works with local universities, enabling students and researchers to study the natural environment, and provides training in forestry management and conservation through its college internship program.

Great Mountain Forest interns collect data surrounding streams and upload photos and data into a GIS mapping system.

"We wanted to do more with the students," said Hans. "Many students don't get the opportunity to actually work in a forest. There is a great benefit to getting students out here, so they can gain practical experience in the woods."

Completely depleted in the 1900s by agriculture and the charcoal industry, the initial 3,000 acres of Great Mountain Forest was purchased as a private conservation effort in 1909.

The focus for the past 100 years has been conservation with the idea that people can work in the forest, harvest wood from it, and use it for educational and research purposes. Working with the University of Connecticut, the University of Massachusetts, Yale University, the University of Maine, and The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, Great Mountain Forest typically has two or three research projects going on at any given time, as well as a weather station that has been collecting weather data since 1932. Its internship program in forestry management and conservation has been ongoing for more than 40 years.

"This is very much a working landscape," said Hans. "It's not just a preservation effort.

"Good forest management is built on solid understanding of forest dynamics and researchers are giving us that information. You can learn a lot by just working in the woods, but you can learn a lot more by experimenting."

Great Mountain Forest's internship program attracts students from forestry programs across the region to study and work in the forest, but without current computer equipment, students were not working with tools that would carry over to careers in conservation and forestry. Lack of current equipment was making it difficult to share data as well.

Community Foundation staff worked with Sandy and David Slemmer whose Fund at the Community Foundation, **The Elson-Slemmer Fund for the Environment**, supports the charitable, scientific and educational protection of the natural environment.

The Fund provided a grant for a GIS-compatible computer, a large format printer and an upgraded GPS unit with a built-in camera. The equipment has enabled staff and volunteers to upgrade and modernize its internship program. The GIS-compatible computer empowered the organization to improve its weather data program. Great Mountain Forest has been an official NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) site, but the new equipment has enabled the sharing of data 24 hours a day to NOAA and to other weather agencies.

2015 Great Mountain Forest interns used the equipment to explore all 6,000 acres, taking photos and electronically pinning locations. They created maps and cataloged the locations and behaviors of invasive species, a vital part of forest monitoring.

"We are very appreciative of the support of The Elson-Slemmer Fund for the Environment of the Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut," said Hans. "Grants like this one are extremely important to our continued research and preservation of Great Mountain Forest."

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

Experts present educational sessions

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Anne Yurasek, Principal of Fio Partners discusses critical board communications with nonprofit presidents, board members and board chairpersons.

On September 10, Chuck Loring, senior governance consultant for BoardSource in Washington DC, and senior partner of the firm of Loring, Sternberg & Associates, offered a two-session seminar on board development and management. Mr. Loring provided guidance about effective board structure, including whom to recruit, and how long board members should serve. Attendees learned the three-step process of fundraising: cultivation, solicitation and stewardship, and how board members can be instrumental in all three steps.

On June 24, Tom Ahern, one of the world's top authorities on how to increase revenue through donor communications, offered two-sessions in donor-centric communications. Mr. Ahern discussed the importance of understanding nonprofits' specific donor demographics, and demonstrated language choices for marketing materials, newsletters and web sites that are compelling as well as inviting and inclusive to donors.

On October 20, Rick Schwartz, independent nonprofit consultant, discussed strategic communications and provided instructions for building a bequest program that invites and encourages donors to include nonprofits in their estate planning.

The Elson-Slemmer Fund for the Environment

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"Everything relies on something else. If we don't protect our natural resources, we ourselves will be affected. Everything is connected, and we need that connection."

Eventually, Sandy answered the call of the wild, leaving her corporate office. She completed a master's degree in environmental sciences at Western Connecticut State University and joined Sharon Audubon as a volunteer in the aviary.

At the Sharon Audubon, Sandy helps rehabilitate raptors, a job she says is most intense in the summer when the aviary is full of babies in need of attention. She also works on the organization's stewardship board and volunteers for events. A volunteer for more than 16 years now, Sandy has cared for thousands of birds. Some remain at the Audubon for educational reasons, but most are rehabilitated and released into the wild.

Giving Back–Looking Forward

In May of 2007, Sandy and David Slemmer established The Elson-Slemmer Fund for the Environment. The Fund has supported the Sharon Audubon in the construction of new aviaries, supported technology upgrades to the weather station and internship program at Great Mountain Forest in Falls Village, and supported the Housatonic Valley Association in the development of trail maps for towns along the Housatonic River.

"Organizations that work to protect the natural environment and the wildlife require a lot of money and resources," said Sandy. "If the Fund can help an organization by supporting an educational program or in another way, I'm all for that.

"Everything relies on something else, even at the soil level—the rocks that make up the soil, the insects and the nematodes. Without them, we wouldn't have the plants and the animals that feed off of the plants. If we don't preserve our natural resources, we, ourselves, will be affected.

"Everything is connected, and we need that connection–to understand the importance of what we have out here–to protect it."

LEAP continues to educate, inspire nonprofit leaders

On November 6, a new generation of LEAP (Leadership Enrichment for Advancing Professionals) participants graduated the 6-week program presented by Danosky & Associates, LLC that prepares nonprofit professionals for their next stage of leadership through hands-on and group activities that delve into building and enhancing leadership style, governance and management, implementing a vision and a plan, financial management and program-based budgeting, the right people for the right job, crisis management and communication, and fundraising and marketing.

"It was empowering to learn more about my role, and I am looking forward to putting the strategies I learned into play."

"As a new executive director with a lot of leadership experience, I found the information about board relations extremely powerful," said Matt Tynan, KidsPlay Children's Museum.

"It was empowering to learn more about my role, and I am looking forward to putting the strategies I learned into play."

Congratulations to the 2015 LEAP graduates (top left) Margaret Haske of the Cornwall Library, Hans M. Carlson of Great Mountain Forest, Sean Hayden of the Northwest Conservation District, Matthew Tynan of KidsPlay Children's Museum, Judith McElhorne of Five Points Gallery, (bottom row) Marnell Stover of the Cornwall Library, Sarah Coons of Sharon Land Trust, Carrie Picard and Dale Picard (not pictured) of Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities (ECAD)

Learn more about the LEAP program online: www.cfnwct.org

Be What's Possible...

If you could do something in just a few minutes that would change lives for decades, would you do it?

A bequest is one of the easiest gifts to make. With the help of an advisor, you can include language in your will or trust specifying a gift be made through The Community Foundation of Northwest CT as part of your estate plan.

A bequest may be made in several ways:

- Gift of a percentage of your estate
- Gift of a specific dollar amount or asset
- Gift from the balance or residue of your estate

Bradford Hoar

For more information, contact Bradford Hoar, VP of Philanthropic Services at bhoar@cfnwct.org or (860) 626-1245.

FOUNDATION FOCUS

Helen Scoville Joins the Community Foundation Board of Directors

Helen Ellsworth Scoville, RN, IBCLC has been named to the board of directors of the Community Foundation. A native of Salisbury and a graduate of George Washington University with a degree in art history, Ms. Scoville was a member of the Board of Directors of the Diane Brown Gallery in Washington DC and New York for nearly a decade.

Read more about Helen Ellsworth Scoville online: www.cfnwct.org/board

Don Mayland Joins the Community Foundation Board of Directors

Donald K. Mayland of Lakeville has been named to the board of directors of the Community Foundation. A graduate of the University of Vermont and American International College, Mr. Mayland designed and developed the Economics Department curriculum at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, where he has been a teacher of Advanced Placement Macro and Micro Economics for more than four decades. Under his tutelage, the economics program grew to one of the largest enrolled elective courses with more than 70 students participating per year.

Read more about Don Mayland online: www.cfnwct.org/board

Julia Scharnberg Joins the Community Foundation as Program and Grants Director

Julia manages the grant-making process for the Community Foundation. She provides pre-application counsel and assistance to nonprofits, and support and due diligence to the board members who award grants. She also manages the post-grant process.

Read more about Julia Scharnberg online: www.cfnwct.org/staff

Also, online...

Community Foundation Releases *Starved for Attention: Food Insecurity in Northwest Connecticut*
The Report highlights key hunger statistics and food-security challenges in our Northwest Corner and serves as a guide for funders and the general public to support the fragile network of organizations that work to address those challenges.
Read more: www.cfnwct.org/starved

Donors, Fundholders Inspire "Gear heads" to Build a Better Robot
The Robotics team at Northwestern Regional High School received grants from the Ruth and Robert Cron Endowment Fund and the Northwest Connecticut Philanthropy Fund for much-needed tools and a trailer to transport their well-built robot to competitions.
Read more: www.cfnwct.org/gearheads

Memorial Fund Sends Children to Summer Camp
Southside Café's George Mazzaferro Memorial Fund of Community Foundation presented a check to YMCA Camp Wa Wa Segowea, and YMCA Camp Mohawk to support camperships.
Read more: www.cfnwct.org/mazzaferro

Corporate Donor Provides Laptops
Cotitivi, a privately held financial services company with strong ties to the Northwest Corner, donated 150 refurbished Lenovo laptop computers for use by nonprofits in Northwest Connecticut.
Read more: www.cfnwct.org/cotitivi

Litchfield Community Center Funds

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The music programs continued to grow, and when the Community Center was built in 2000, Mr. North wanted to use the opportunity to make music available to more people in the community. In 2002, he established the **Litchfield Community Center Music Fund** to support various music programs at the Community Center.

"With the opening of the Community Center, more people could come and enjoy music together," said Berta. "Dan wanted to be a part of making that happen.

"He gave us freedom in our program choices, knowing that people like all kinds of different music. We've continued dixieland, swing, rock, bluegrass, classical, everything really."

Mr. North passed away in 2008, but the Litchfield Community Center Music Fund continues to support programs that bring the community together. In 2015, the Fund supported youth and teen programs: DJ Music, Red Hot Chili Slam & Bands, Friday Feast & Dancing Feat, Enzo Boscarino Serenade, and Irish Music & Coffee House.

Planning for Generations of Community

After 15 successful years of bringing the community together through events and programs, the Community Center began looking toward long-term financial planning. Staff started to notice that children who had attended programs at the Community Center were returning as teenagers and young adults.

"Kids who were here when they were teenagers are now in their late 20s and early 30s," said Berta. "Their kids are coming back for programming. This is what we hoped for."

Community Center board members and staff wanted to establish a fund that could be used for unplanned circumstances or big expenses beyond the yearly budget, a fund that would ensure that the Community Center would be bringing the Community together forever.

In 2014, the Community Center established the **Litchfield Community Center Reserve Fund**.

"Our hopes are to let it grow and encourage people to contribute," said Berta. "The Fund provides security. There's no doubt that for our organization and the Community Foundation, we're on a parallel path of serving Northwest Connecticut in perpetuity.

"We know we can continue to serve as a hub of Litchfield, a place where the community comes together, as our town changes, as our area changes, as our state changes, as our world changes."

"The Center is an incredible resource for people of all ages, as well as organizations and businesses, throughout the Northwest Corner and beyond. It is reassuring knowing we can continue to be a hub where the community comes together. We intend to do our best to meet the needs and interests of those we serve."

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
of NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT

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Questions or comments?
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