

theSteward

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Northwest Corner Homeless Find their Gathering Place



Nancy Cannavo and client Frank Douglas Stephens at the Gathering Place

Amid the historic buildings, antique colonial and comfortable contemporary homes that dapple the rolling hills of the Northwest Corner, are less visible “homes,” makeshift residences and sleeping nooks where members of our community—those living in a state of chronic homelessness—hide away from the cold and the wind. Some are homeless as a result of a struggle with opioid addiction, some with untreated mental or physical medical conditions, many because they cannot afford to pay for housing, food, and medication on a minimum-wage salary.

No Place to Go

In 2011, there were 156 homeless people in Litchfield County, 30 percent of them chronically homeless, meaning they had experienced homelessness four or more times in three years. These members of our community, including veterans, and single-parents with young children, hunkered down in tents in the woods close to town or “couch surfed,” staying with friends for a night and then moving on. With no place to go during the day to escape the elements, they gathered at libraries, coffee shops, and businesses to stay warm.

“There was no central daytime location to find homeless individuals and families and no central location for them to get help,” said Nancy Cannavo, of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and New Beginnings of Northwest Hills Litchfield County.

“Once the local shelters were closed each morning, those who had stayed there the night before left for the day, and it was not feasible for service providers to work nights when those needing shelter returned.”

Services providers, including social services, mental and physical health services, job-placement and housing-assistance programs that worked to help the homeless, were spread throughout Northwest Corner towns. Many experiencing or at risk for homelessness did not know where to look for help, and service providers often had difficulty finding and keeping in touch with those who could benefit from their services.

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Northwest Corner Kids Outpace Obesity



Elementary school students from 15 schools across the Northwest Corner crossed the finish line at Torrington High School to complete the final mile of a 26.2-mile marathon they began 10 weeks earlier as part of Rod Dixon’s KidsMarathon Connecticut through Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities.

Bill Burgess of Litchfield, chairman of the board of directors of the KidsMarathon Foundation and president and executive director of Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities worked with the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference to bring the KidsMarathon across Connecticut and to the Northwest Corner.

A grant from the **Carlton D. Fyler and Jenny R. Fyler Fund** enabled 600 Torrington students to participate in the in-school program that empowers children to complete a full marathon by running an average of 3 miles per week, while learning the value of exercise and healthy nutrition habits. Northwest Corner children completed their last mile on the running track of the Robert H. Frost Sports Complex at Torrington High School to the cheers of hundreds of supporters.

“KidsMarathon increases the physical activity level of children during the school day with realistic goal setting and inspires students to make lifelong healthy choices,” said Donna Labbe of Torrington Public Schools.

“Participants in the KidsMarathon hear over and over again that finishing is winning and winning is finishing. It’s the motto of the KidsMarathon, and an important part of the culture of the program.

“Athletic kids as well as kids who have shied away from physical activity in the past are encouraged to participate, to finish—to win for themselves.”

KidsMarathon participants show off their medals after taking their final lap of the KidsMarathon at Torrington High School.



Watch the KidsMarathon video at northwestcf.org/kidsmarathon

Roberta Lee August’s Life— a Gift to the Northwest Corner



Described as a gift to our communities, a shepherd of kindness, and a symphony of love, the Northwest Corner recently said goodbye to Roberta Lee August. Roberta passed away in the summer of 2016, leaving behind a community grateful for her life and so much better for her stewardship.

“Roberta knew what mattered in life and lived life to the fullest,

sharing her talents, time and treasures,” said JoAnn Ryan, president and CEO of Northwest Connecticut’s Chamber of Commerce.

Roberta was born in Torrington and raised in Litchfield. She earned a an associate’s degree from Cazenovia Junior College for Women, studied the humanities at the University of Connecticut, and graduated from the Williams School of Banking in Williamstown, Mass.

She began her banking career as an administrative assistant in the trust department of the Hartford National Bank and Trust Company. Over the course of her 30-year career, she rose to vice president of the Private Clients Group of Connecticut National Bank, retiring in 2001.

Roberta was often teased about her boundless enthusiasm and seemingly endless care for others.

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Donors Put Education Within Reach for Hundreds of Northwest Corner Students

More than 180 students from our Northwest Corner were awarded scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Students received \$133,225 in scholarships through Community Foundation scholarship funds. Students are awarded based on parameters set by donors and, for most scholarships, by financial need, academic excellence, extracurricular accomplishments, work experience, and application essays.

"I am honored to have been chosen to receive tuition assistance from the **Khurshed Bhumgara Fund**. The award will be put to excellent use as I continue my education and work toward my goal of becoming a neurosurgeon," said Nicholas LaMothe, Connecticut Children's Medical Center neurosurgery intern.

"I would like to send my sincerest gratitude for offering me the **Russell Anderson, Carmen Brooks Anderson, and Henry**

Vail Brooks Scholarship Fund," said Bang Lam, biomedical engineering student at the University of Connecticut.

"It is truly an honor to know someone out there believes in my future."

[View awarded students by scholarship fund at northwestcf.org/scholarship-recipients](http://northwestcf.org/scholarship-recipients)

[Learn more about scholarship funds at northwestcf.org/giving-your-way/funds](http://northwestcf.org/giving-your-way/funds)

Fish Tales Offers a Swimming Welcome to the Riverwalk



Local artist Danielle Mailer inspired more than 100 community members to help create Project: FishTales, a 186' by 22' fish mural on the back of the Staples building in Torrington. The mural was inspired by the revitalization of a once highly polluted Naugatuck River that is now home to many fish species.

A grant from the **Carlton D. Fyler and Jenny R. Fyler Fund** supported the final phase of work and the installation of the mural.

"Young, old, teenagers, parents, drop-ins and regulars, all rolled up their sleeves on weekends and weeknights to assist in making this happen," said Danielle Mailer.

"Project: FishTales echoes all the energy and good-will of a town-wide effort. It is a symbol of our community banding together. The mural is a visual testimony of celebration and pride-of-place."

Over a 12-month period community members from all over the Northwest Corner met in studio space adjacent to KidsPlay Children's Museum to paint the 400 pieces that comprise the mural, which now stands as a colorful welcome marking the entrance to the 44-mile Naugatuck Riverwalk.

"Not only did the Community Foundation provide financial support, but staff members participated in the actual painting process," said Danielle. "I am moved and deeply grateful for an organization that recognizes the value of the arts as a way to strengthen and revitalize a community."

[View photos of the creation of Project: FishTales at northwestcf.org/fishtales](http://northwestcf.org/fishtales)



Volunteers from across the Northwest Corner worked on Project: FishTales on evenings and weekends.

Gladys Fingar Brings Comfort and Joy to the Northwest Corner

Gladys Fingar of Torrington worked in housekeeping for many years at Highland Acres, a nursing home in Winsted. She enjoyed flower gardening and sewing, including making all of her own work smocks, but Gladys was most known for her enthusiastic kindness for others, evident through her many gifts to charitable organizations and her love of animals.

Gladys gave to the Calvary Baptist Church, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, LARC, The Little Guild of St. Francis, and the North Shore Animal League.

She especially loved the holidays as evidenced through her collection of festive sweaters and her holiday baking. Every Christmas for years she would collect the wish lists of the residents of the Southbury Training School, sometimes 20 or 30 residents, and purchase every item on their lists.

When the Make-A-Wish Foundation was seeking donors to help send a local boy on a trip to Florida, her only question was, "how much do you need?" She then paid for the whole trip.

"Gladys was very generous," said Sheryl Undari, a close friend of more than 30 years. "She loved to help people. She loved to make people happy."

Gladys could not pass up a bargain. She enjoyed shopping and would often purchase gifts for her friends and neighbors that she would leave on their doorsteps, ringing the doorbell and running away.

Neighbors and friends were not the only recipients of Gladys' generous spirit. She adopted numerous stray cats and dogs, sometimes delivering them to The Little Guild of St. Francis, often taking them to her home and caring for them.

"Gladys never met a stray animal she didn't love," said Sheryl. "She even went to the cemetery weekly to feed the squirrels."

Gladys passed away in the Fall of 2015, but her care for others and her love of animals continues. In true form, she left surprise gifts to the people and animals of the Northwest Corner. Through her estate planning, Gladys made gifts to the **Northwest Connecticut Philanthropy Fund** for the purpose of supporting holiday-related grants in the Northwest Corner and to the **Critter Fund**, a fund that assists with shelter, rescue, and adoption, training, prevention of cruelty, spaying and neutering, elderly companionship, services for disabled individuals and wildlife preservation.

Be What's Possible...

You know what's important to you, but did you know you can continue to support the work of nonprofits in the Northwest Corner that share your goals and dreams – forever?

You can continue to champion the causes you care about by establishing a field-of-interest fund; support specific nonprofits through a designated fund, or support the community you love through an unrestricted fund.

Working with your advisor and the Community Foundation, you can include language in your will or trust specifying that a gift be made to the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation as part of your estate plan. You can establish a fund by giving:

- a percentage of your estate
- a specific dollar amount or asset
- the balance or remainder of your estate



Bradford Hoar

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

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

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Northwest Corner Homeless Find their Gathering Place

Networked Services

New Beginnings of Northwest Hills Litchfield County, a collaborative of more than 30 social service agencies, set out to change that.

In September 2013, after having collaborated with the Community Foundation to research and write *The Plan to End Homelessness in Northwest Connecticut*, a report that presents a roadmap for an integrated and strategic approach to ending homelessness systemically by creating a series of goals and objectives that address prevention, housing, services and employment, Nancy Cannavo reached out the Community Foundation.

New Beginnings of Northwest Hills Litchfield County requested a grant to purchase and renovate a building in Torrington to serve as a hub for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, a one-stop shop, where those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness could come and connect with all of the service providers that could help them.

Through a \$165,000 grant from the **Draper Foundation Fund**, New Beginnings purchased and renovated a building at 21 Prospect Street A in Torrington. With additional grants from the Draper Foundation Fund, the **Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund** and the **Northwest Connecticut Philanthropy Fund** that supported operational costs and addressed fire codes, the Gathering Place was up and running.

Since opening on April 29, 2015, service providers have helped hundreds of individuals receive the services they need and transition into permanent housing, including 12 individuals who had been living in camping tents in the woods near Main St. in Torrington.

The Way Home

The Gathering Place provides one-stop access to service providers, where individuals and families learn what services they qualify for, and depending on their needs, find shelter at FISH/Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwest Connecticut or the Northwest Connecticut YMCA Winchester Emergency Shelter, apply for housing assistance, and SNAP benefits and/or receive referrals for mental health, substance abuse or medical services. They can also work on resumés, shower, wash clothes, get a haircut and receive job-appropriate clothing. Service providers hold coordinated meetings at the facility and are able to meet with clients in a central location that is easily accessible.

"We see a lot of people who are working and just can't afford to pay to rent," said Nancy.

According to Nancy, those who seek help at the Gathering Place often have suffered financial losses. They have been laid off from their jobs or are working, but earning far less than they had been. They are struggling to provide a home, medical care and food for themselves and their children. Some are wrestling with addiction. Some are leaving abusive relationships. Others are ageing out of foster care with no family support. More often than not, they are working, but unable to afford a place to live.

That was the case for a woman who recently came to the Gathering Place for help. She was working but struggling to pay rent and purchase food for her and her children. After making several late rent payments, she was evicted from her apartment. She set up a tent in the woods, the only place she could stay that would be close enough for her to walk to work. Gathering Place service providers were able to help her garner enough resources to put together a security deposit for an apartment near her employer.

"She and her children are now doing very well," said Nancy. "She is working full time at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, able to afford her apartment and care for her children."

Another recent client became homeless after suffering a traumatic brain

injury as a result of falling into an elevator shaft. A gentle soft-spoken man, Frank Douglas Stephens came to the Gathering Place to wash his clothes and shower. A talented artist, he often sketched pictures while he waited for his clothes to dry. Over several months, service providers worked closely with Frank, helping him obtain permanent housing.

Many of those who now have a home because of the services provided through the Gathering Place return as volunteers.

"They [volunteers] received help through the Gathering Place. They are thankful, and self-sufficient, and they want to give back," said Nancy.

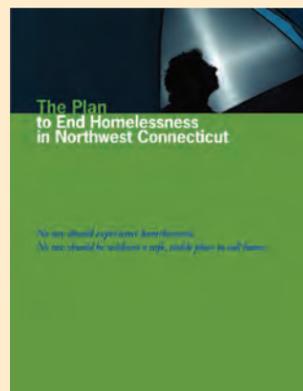
"There are many reasons people experience homelessness," she said. "With coordinated support, people can get housed. Once housed, they do well."

"The Gathering Place plays a critical role in helping homeless people and families get into safe and stable homes, something we would not be able to do without the support of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation."



An illustration by Gathering Place client Frank Douglas Stephens, who became homeless after suffering a traumatic brain injury.

The Plan to End Homelessness in Northwest Connecticut



In 2013 the Community Foundation and New Beginnings of Northwest Hills Litchfield County co-chaired *The Plan to End Homelessness in Northwest Connecticut*. The Plan revealed that our Northwest Corner has a high percentage of chronically homeless individuals, those who have been continuously homeless for a year or more or who are experiencing at least their fourth episode of homelessness in three years.

The Plan presents a roadmap for an integrated and strategic approach to ending homelessness systemically by creating a series of goals and objectives that address prevention, housing, services and employment.

"The plan was largely a collaborative project," said Guy Rovezzi, Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation president. "More than 70 nonprofits, municipal organizations, local businesses and community members came together to create a plan to end homelessness in our Northwest Corner, a goal that we continue to work toward."

Read *The Plan to End Homelessness in Northwest Connecticut* at northwestcf.org/publications

Grants Supporting the Gathering Place

Draper Foundation Fund

\$165,000 to support the purchase of a building at 21 Prospect Street
\$35,000 to support the replacement of a spiral staircase and installation of a fire marshal approved door
\$20,000 to support renovation of the waiting room and meeting space to better accommodate client and administrative staff needs

Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund

\$21,000 in support of capital expenditures

Northwest Connecticut Philanthropy Fund \$4,000 in support of capital expenditures through a gift from the estate of Margaret Reventlow

Donors Bridge Gaps with Critical Needs Support

Through the **Draper Foundation Fund**, the **Robert V. Carr Fund** and the **Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund**, the Community Foundation makes available \$40,000 in critical-needs grants every year for nonprofits serving some of the area's most economically distressed residents and providing the most basic of necessities—food, warm clothing, fuel assistance and shelter.

Organizations apply for grants through a streamlined online application in the Fall. Grants are awarded in December. In 2015, 52 organizations received a critical needs grant.

View 2015 critical needs grant recipients at northwestcf.org/2015criticalneeds

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Roberta Lee August

Her many friends joked that she worked just as hard or harder in retirement than she had in her career as a banker. This certainly rings true of her dedication to the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation.

Roberta played a vital role in the success of the Community Foundation. She was a founding volunteer. In the early years, before the community foundation had staff members, Roberta worked as a banking trust officer, shepherding the Community Foundation's modest initial resources.

For years, she acted as liaison between the bank and the Community Foundation. As the Community Foundation grew, Roberta volunteered her time, talents, and resources wherever and whenever they were needed.

For more than four decades, she dedicated herself to the Community Foundation, serving as board of directors recording secretary, member of the governance and scholarship committees and Community Foundation ambassador, as well as a trustee to the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation.

Roberta's love of community, loyalty and generosity did not end with the Community Foundation. She volunteered and served on the boards of countless nonprofits serving the Northwest Corner.

In addition to playing key roles in the success of programs to improve lives and strengthen communities, Roberta volunteered as conservator for many elderly and mentally ill community members. Over the decades, Roberta's dedication was recognized in many ways. She was named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary. She was awarded the YMCA Legacy Award, the Wisdom House Award and the Northwest Connecticut Chamber Community Leader Award. Prime Time House named a building in her honor, and Cazenovia College awarded her an honorary doctorate in the humanities.

"Roberta considered all of us her family—community members, nonprofit staff and volunteers and those who benefited from their work—and Roberta loved her family," said Guy Rovezzi, Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation president.

"Our community has lost one of its finest," said JoAnn Ryan, "but the legacy of Roberta's life—loyalty to a fault, generosity that knew no bounds, deep and sincere concern and unconditional love and compassion for others, courage, optimism and grace—remains in our hearts as we honor her life by continuing to steward the many causes she championed."



(from left to right) Jill O'Brien, Roberta Lee August, Jim Garfield, Mary Loyer, and Joan O'Brien at the Community Foundation in 2008.

Roberta Lee August Fund—a Legacy of Love

In 1998, with donations from herself and 20 community members, Roberta Lee August established the **Roberta Lee August Fund** to support literacy and mental health initiatives in the Northwest Corner. Since its establishment, the fund has supported:

- book giveaways to Winchester elementary school students
- the enhancement of an electronic health record system for the Torrington Family Service Center
- the purchase of literacy tools and educational materials for children ages 2 through 7 years, as part of the Family Literacy Center at Forbes Elementary School
- the Prime Time Houses WISH Program and the Rural Mental Health Initiative

An endowed field-of-interest fund, the Roberta Lee August Fund indefinitely supports programs that serve mental health initiatives and increase literacy in the Northwest Corner, two causes Roberta spent much of the last 40 years championing.

Donate to the Roberta Lee August Fund at northwestcf.org/donate

Also online...

Improvements and Ingenuities in Northwest Corner Philanthropy

The Community Foundation recently launched an online grant application process, a searchable online nonprofit database, and a flexible donation page that empowers donors to make donations to multiple funds with one transaction or set up recurring donation accounts.

Read more at northwestcf.org/improvements

Grants Awarded in the Northwest Corner

More than 20 area nonprofits were awarded \$84,400 in the most recent grant cycle. Grantees include the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon, the Torrington Police Activities League and many more Northwest Corner nonprofits.

Read more at northwestcf.org/2016summer

Draper Foundation Fund awards \$651,025 to area nonprofits

Designated nonprofits were awarded \$455,625, with \$235,400 in donor-advised grants awarded to nonprofits that provide essential programs and services for residents of Northwest Connecticut.

Read more at northwestcf.org/draper2016

Board Chair Events Educate, Encourage Networking

Throughout the year, the Community Foundation partners with the Connecticut Community Foundation to bring together nonprofit board chairs for educational sessions and networking.

Read more at northwestcf.org/boardchair

Principles of Fundraising Series Brings Experts to the Northwest Corner

The Principles of Fundraising series, presented by the Community Foundation, the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits and the AFP Connecticut Chapter offered five half-day workshops about fundraising theory designed to help new and established nonprofits raise critically needed money more effectively and efficiently.

Read more at northwestcf.org/principles-fundraising

New Cohort Begins Leadership Enrichment for Advancing Professionals (LEAP) Spring 2017

LEAP is an intensive eight-week program designed toward building skills in all areas of nonprofit leadership. Presented by Danosky & Associates, LLC, LEAP builds a foundation of skills and awareness for nonprofit professionals. Facilitators share their experience, expertise, and insights while engaging participants in presentations, group discussions, research and case study analysis, simulations, home assignments, and action-planning activities that explore leadership, board governance, finance management, human resources, fundraising and budgeting.

Read more at northwestcf.org/leap



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