

# *the*Steward

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## Jill Pudlinski—Honoring a Life of Boundless Curiosity and Never-ending Discovery

Barbara and John Pudlinski created a home environment where their children thrived on curiosity and creativity. Both educators at Torrington High School, Barbara and John instilled in their children a love of math and science that inspired their son Christopher to earn a doctorate and become an educator.

Their daughter Jill, an avid mathematician and science scholar, passionately pursued a career in the scientific research of the natural environment, an extension of her love of all things that swam, skittered or trotted in the water and over the land.

"Jill was known for her intelligence," said Barbara. "She was a curious kid who loved nature, insects, critters, dogs and marine life. She was skilled in science and math, but she also loved the arts, participating in drama and band. She had so many interests. Jill's mind was always going."

As a young adult, Jill worked as a life guard, and SCUBA diver. She studied Marine Biology at Colgate University, spending a semester at sea learning how to captain a ship off the shores of Cape Cod. After graduation, her love of nature led her to a science research position at Smithers, where she worked for 18 years conducting environmental, marine and clinical trials for pharmaceuticals, and as a senior reporter for the lab.



*Barbara and Christopher Pudlinski with a photo of Jill Pudlinski*

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### ***Our Children Our Future,*** **a Report on the Importance** **of Early Childhood**



The Community Foundation has released ***Our Children Our Future***. The report underscores the importance of the early childhood years and offers a glimpse into the state of child well-being in Northwest Connecticut.

The Community Foundation created this report to better understand the cause and effect of various developmental obstacles that may prevent some local children from reaching their potential.

***"Our hope is that all community stakeholders will use this report to take steps to address these findings, develop partnerships with others to create new strategies for supporting our children and families, and to advocate for local, state and federal policy changes that will improve child and family outcomes."***

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### **Fundholders, Donors Continue** **to Provide for Basic Needs** **During Covid-19 Recovery**

In the midst of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic communities in Northwest CT came together to ensure that economically challenged residents received the support they needed. Because of the generosity of those in our communities, the Community Foundation was able to provide almost \$500,000 in grants in early 2021 to support the most basic of needs: food and shelter.

"We are very grateful to the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Draper Foundation Fund**," said Pamela Carignan of The Salvation Army.

"We witness people in need on a daily basis. Without the support of donors like you, our work would not be possible."

As recovery efforts continue, Community Foundation funds continue to support our most vulnerable neighbors throughout the Northwest Corner. Early 2021 grants have supported FISH of Northwestern Connecticut, Cornwall Food and Fuel, Gifts of Love, Community Kitchen



*Backpacks filled with food lined up for delivery to food insecure families with children in Torrington elementary schools made possible by the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Lucia Tuttle Fritz Fund***

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# Community Foundation Funds Keep Music Mountain Vibrant

In the rolling hills of Falls Village, there is a small collection of buildings, tucked amid lush grounds. It is home to Music Mountain, a chamber music festival venue, an educational workshop, a place for community to gather and connect through live music—and the embodiment of an almost 100-year old dream.



Concertgoers enjoy a live-streamed performance on the grounds of Music Mountain on July 4, 2021

Music Mountain was established in 1930 by Jacques Gordon, a talented young immigrant from Ukraine who rose to become the youngest concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony. While playing with the Berkshire String Quartet, Jacques set his sights on the hills of Falls Village to fulfill his dream of creating a chamber music festival.

Since then, Music Mountain has grown into a vibrant music venue, annually hosting dozens of chamber music performances, in addition to a new series of concerts featuring jazz, big band, and Broadway favorites. The Music Mountain Academy holds six workshops a year, welcoming young musicians who are mentored by seasoned artists.

Each August, the grounds are filled with music as community members of all ages gather and settle in with canvas and paint brush in hand for the popular Painting Music event with local artist Vincent Inconiglios and the Cassatt String Quartet.

But in early 2020, for a brief moment, the music stopped.

“Everyone was so isolated,” said Oskar Espina-Ruiz, artistic and executive director of Music Mountain. “We knew we had to do something.”

With a grant from the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Khurshed Bhungara Fund** and the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Covid-19**

**Rapid Response Fund** Music Mountain staff purchased sound reinforcement, recording and livestreaming equipment.

“Live from Music Mountain,” a television-show inspired program featuring Oskar and various musicians, was born. Interviews, discussion, music and laughter streamed out of Music Mountain and into the homes of 30,000 patrons.

“Community members got the opportunity to see us, to talk to their favorite musicians, we cracked jokes and answered questions from viewers in real-time, and of course, we played music.”

“Music is transformative,” said Oskar. “And, it’s social. We learned so much about using technology to connect with each other. We all recuperated a part of what we were missing that summer.”

As restrictions eased, Music Mountain employed the new technology to welcome community members to enjoy Music Mountain from the grounds. Two large screens on the lawn live-streamed concerts from inside the building as music poured from audiophile speakers. Community members sat at socially distanced picnic tables or brought blankets and chairs from home. Others enjoyed the concert inside Gordon Hall masked and socially distanced.

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## Our Children Our Future, a Report on the Importance of Early Childhood

Funded by the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Draper Foundation Fund** and the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Northwest Building Healthier Communities Fund**, the report is intended to provide insight into how many of the region’s youngest residents may not have access to what they need for optimal development, even when they are supported by loving parents and a caring network of state and local service providers, health professionals, educators and neighbors devoted to their well-being.

“Our hope is that all community stakeholders will use this report to take steps to address these findings, develop partnerships with others to create new strategies for supporting our children and families, and to advocate for local, state and federal policy changes that will improve child and family outcomes,” said Guy Rovezzi, Community Foundation president.

**Our Children Our Future** is informing strategic investments on behalf of our children, families, and the communities in which they reside, including the development of the Early Childhood Alliance.

Read **Our Children Our Future** at [www.northwestcf.org](http://www.northwestcf.org)

## Community Foundation Launches Early Childhood Alliance

Informed by **Our Children Our Future**, the Community Foundation is developing the **Early Childhood Alliance**, a partnership of community residents and all those working to enhance the well-being of our youngest children (0-8) and their families.

The Alliance is an informal network that values, supports, and strengthens organizations, structures, and systems to improve the lives of children and families throughout Northwest Connecticut.



Early Childhood Alliance Coordinator Heather Black meets with parents at the Torrington Police Activities League backpack giveaway event in Torrington

What matters to you? Tell us at [northwestcf.org/contact](http://northwestcf.org/contact)

## Karen O'Connor Continues to Make the Northwest Corner a Better Place

For decades Karen O'Connor was a beloved teacher and coach at Lewis Mills High School. She was a three-sport athlete at Southern Connecticut State College, where she received her Bachelor's Degree. She received her Master's Degree from Springfield College in Mass.

A life-long sports enthusiast Karen taught physical education and coached countless students participating in hockey, basketball, cheerleading, badminton, and tennis.

Karen was named National Coach-of-the-Year for Girl's Sports in District 1 in 1978 and received multiple Coach-of-the-Year awards from the Connecticut Coaches Association.

In 1983, she was named the first female president of the 3,000-member Connecticut High School Coaches Association, and in 2006, she was inducted into the Ken Hoagland Lewis S. Mills Athletic Hall of Fame.

Karen eventually retired to Vero Beach, Fla. where she served as President of the SeaWatch Condominium Association and was a member of the



Quail Valley Golf Club, but she never forgot her deep connection to Northwest Connecticut.

"Karen's roots were in Norfolk, where she grew up," said Margo O'Connor, Karen's sister-in-law. "She was a friendly, amicable person.

"She knew how much good local nonprofits were doing in her community. She wanted to help."

*"She knew how much good local nonprofits were doing in her community. She wanted to help."*

Through her estate planning, Karen established the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Karen M. O'Connor Fund**. The Fund supports elderly and disabled care for residents of Norfolk, Winsted and Torrington. It also supports local nonprofits when and where it's needed the most.

To make a gift to the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Karen M. O'Connor Fund**, visit [northwestcf.org/give](http://northwestcf.org/give)

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## Jill Pudlinski—Honoring a Life of Boundless Curiosity and Never-ending Discovery

She lived on the shore on West Island Fairhaven, Massachusetts. Her friends on the island consisted not just of human residents, but the wild foxes and rabbits she often befriended.

"She called it her 'island paradise,'" Barbara recalled.

When she wasn't working, Jill was exploring. She visited Hawaii and the Bahamas, travelled through the Panama Canal, and most recently, visited Iceland with Barbara and John.

In June of 2020, Jill unexpectedly passed away. Friends from near and far reached out to each other. They shared memories of growing up together in Torrington—fun-filled days at Mother Goose Preschool, laughing and learning in the classrooms and in the halls of Torrington High School.

They decided the best way to honor Jill's curiosity, intelligence and love of learning was to establish a scholarship in her name. They collected donations in Jill's honor and reached out to Barbara.

In late Spring, Barbara Pudlinski established the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship Fund**. The scholarship is awarded to graduating seniors of Torrington High School who have demonstrated achievements in math and science.

"We wanted to work with the Community Foundation because we want Jill's legacy to

continue indefinitely," said Christopher. "We know under the management of the Community Foundation that Jill's fund will continue to grow and award scholarships in her name long after we are gone."

"There is so much more research left to do," said Barbara. "The recipients of Jill's scholarship will continue on—they will continue the great work that she would have done had she lived."

To make a gift to the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship Fund**, visit [northwestcf.org/give](http://northwestcf.org/give)



Barbara Pudlinski (left) congratulates Liora Jones (right), a 2021 recipient of the Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship

### Local Students Awarded the Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship

In 2021 Kathryn Pagano of Torrington was awarded the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship**. The high school senior will attend Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the Fall, majoring in Biological and Biomedical Sciences with the goal of becoming a Biochemist.

Liora Jones of Torrington was awarded the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Jill Pudlinski Tavano Memorial Scholarship**. The high school senior will attend Wellesley College in the Fall with a major in mathematics.

In 2021, the Northwest CT Community Foundation awarded \$235,000 in scholarships from 74 scholarship funds to local students pursuing degrees in medicine, science, the arts, engineering, and education.

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



LEGACY  
SOCIETY

**Be What's Possible – You don't always have an opportunity to make things better. Now you do.**

By working with your advisor to establish a field-of-interest fund, support specific nonprofits through a designated fund, or provide help when and where it's needed the most through a discretionary

fund, you can create a better future for your community.

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 CT 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

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

Contribute to your favorite fund online at [northwestcf.org](http://northwestcf.org)

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## Community Foundation Funds Keep Music Mountain Vibrant

“They had a really good time,” said Oskar. “And we were able to host more people safely. The technology purchased through the support of the Community Foundation enables people to enjoy music in the fresh air on the grounds, and it enables those who cannot come here because of age, or illness to log in and enjoy a live show from the comfort of their homes.

“We are coming out of Covid, stronger than before. Music Mountain is a vibrant place this summer.”

*“The technology purchased through the support of the Community Foundation enables people to enjoy music in the fresh air on the grounds, and it enables those who cannot come here because of age, or illness to log in and enjoy a live show from the comfort of their homes.”*

### Recent Grants Awarded to Music Mountain

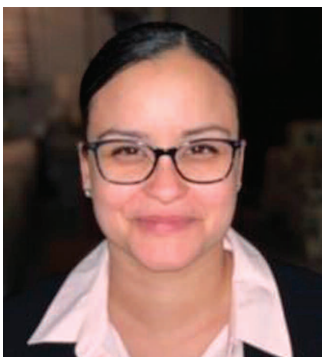
Northwest CT Community Foundation **Khurshed Bhumgara Fund** for the purchase and installation of sound reinforcement recording equipment; maintenance at Viola House and Gordon Hall; a ticketing system, LED stage lighting, and live-streaming equipment, including the cost of installation and staff training.

Northwest CT Community Foundation **Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund** for the creation and presentation of virtual summer programming: “Live from Music Mountain.”

Northwest CT Community Foundation **Lucia Tuttle Fritz Fund** in support of program expenses for Painting Music, an innovative, collaborative educational program for children and adults.

## FOUNDATION FOCUS

### Community Foundation Welcomes Early Childhood Alliance Staff



**Heather Black, LPCA, IMH-E.** has joined the Community Foundation as **Early Childhood Alliance Coordinator**. Heather is responsible for developing and refining the Alliance processes and implementation strategies.

Heather will work closely with regional organizations as a partner to build the Alliance. She will foster information and best-practice sharing among Alliance members and community partners.

Most crucially, she will work to strengthen partnerships that build greater alignment across the region’s stakeholders.

The Community Foundation has contracted **Richard Sussman, PhD.** to help facilitate the formation of the **Early Childhood Alliance**.



Dr. Sussman was the leader and driving force behind the Hartford Foundation’s 25-year, \$35 million early childhood initiative. As part of a local planning team, Dr. Sussman helped create the first municipal blueprint for early childhood services in Hartford and assisted in the development of both the Hartford Office for Young Children and the establishment of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

Dr. Sussman also developed, in partnership with Hartford parents, six neighborhood based Family Centers, which serve as local neighborhood community hubs for parent education and training, child development, and resident mobilization on family issues.

## Also Online...

### Draper Foundation Fund Provides more than \$750,000 in Support of Area Nonprofits

The Northwest CT Community Foundation **Draper Foundation Fund** recently awarded area nonprofits \$750,275. The Fund awarded \$583,200 to 19 designated nonprofits and \$167,075 in donor-advised grants to nonprofits that provide essential programs and services for residents of Northwest Connecticut.

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

### More than \$230,000 in Scholarships Awarded for 2021-2022

The Community Foundation has awarded more than \$230,000 in scholarships and awards to local students for the 2021-2022 academic year.

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

### State Leaders, Residents Meet at the Foundation to Discuss Broadband Internet for Northwest Connecticut

Gov. Ned Lamont and U.S. Sen. Christopher S. Murphy were joined by state Rep. Maria Horn as well as regional town leaders and residents to discuss the region’s poor internet and cell phone service.

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

### Women & Girls Host Virtual Comedic Event

On March 25th, the Northwest CT Community Foundation Women & Girls Fund hosted a virtual event with feminist humor maven Gina Barreca. The event titled “Why 2021 Will Need all the Humor you can Provide: Laughter, Community and Strength” was a fun-filled evening laughter and prizes.

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

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## Funding Basic Needs During Covid-19 Recovery

of Torrington, Friendly Hands Food Bank, Hazon, Litchfield Department of Social Services, New Beginnings of Northwest Hills, Church of Christ Congregational, Salvation Army Winsted Regional Service Center, and Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities.

*“We are very grateful to the Northwest CT Community Foundation **Draper Foundation Fund**,” said Pamela Carignan of The Salvation Army.*

*“We witness people in need on a daily basis. Without the support of donors like you, our work would not be possible.”*



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