

The Community Fund for WOMEN & GIRLS

Winter 2023

a component fund of  The **COMMUNITY** Foundation for Greater New Haven

fundforwomenandgirls.org



Sanctuary Kitchen, a program of CitySeed that supports immigrant and refugee chefs, is one of 10 grantees of the 2023 Pathways to Economic Security for Women grant awards.

Photo: Judy Sirota Rosenthal

Economic Security Funding Helps 2,989 Local Women 190K in Grants for Entrepreneurship and Career Advancement

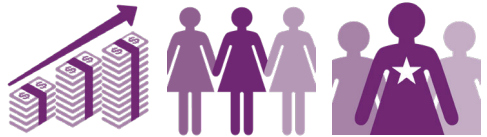
The Community Fund for Women & Girls is helping women start businesses and advance in their careers with its **2023 Pathways to Economic Security for Women** grant awards. Announced in June, the grants provide a total of **\$190,000** to 10 Greater New Haven nonprofit programs offering job-skills training, entrepreneur coaching and other services focused on helping improve economic security for local women.

Over three rounds of funding since 2022, the grant program has directly supported 2,989 women in Greater New Haven and has indirectly supported 10,202 women.

“With these grants, we are supporting important programs in the community that improve the lives of women and their families,” said **Christine Kim**, chair of the Fund. We are grateful for their work.”

The Pathways grant program was designed following a 2021 study commissioned and funded in part by the Fund. The study found that unemployment claims by women surpassed those of men for the first time in state history. Other findings showed that only six percent of families of color can afford high-quality infant daycare or toddler programs. The Fund responded with a grant program that focuses

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Economic Advancement, Collaboration, Leadership

The Community Fund for Women & Girls, the region’s only permanent charitable endowment dedicated solely to advancing women and girls, promotes the social and **economic advancement** of women through **strategic philanthropy, grants advocacy** and **collaboration**. Working in partnership with donors and nonprofits, the Fund provides **gender-based** grant support for programs focused on economic advancement and collaboration. The Fund also directs support to strengthen organizations in the Fund’s **Girls of Color Mentoring Network**. The Fund **elevates** and **celebrates** the **voices of women** through annual **convenings** on topics of importance to women. These activities are made possible by the combined **support of donors** to the Fund. **Read about our strategy in action in the stories inside! >>**



More than 650 women have gone through CAANH's S.M.A.R.T. program since it began 16 years ago.

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on workforce training, employment readiness, entrepreneurship and wraparound services such as childcare, transportation and stipends.

“As the economic impacts of the pandemic continue to play out in areas such as employment, childcare and the rising costs of goods and services, it is vital that we continue to identify the disparities experienced by women — particularly women of color — and invest in programs and services that work to ensure their economic stability,” said Kara Straun, director of program and evaluation at The Community Foundation.

2023 Pathways to Economic Security for Women Grant Awards

- All Our Kin - \$20,000
- Christian Community Action - \$20,000
- CitySeed Inc. - \$20,000
- Collab - \$20,000
- Community Action Agency of New Haven - \$20,000
- Life Health & Wellness Center - \$15,000
- Phenomenal I Am, Inc. - \$20,000
- Spanish Community of Wallingford - \$20,000
- The New Haven Club Inc. of The National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc. - \$15,000
- Winning Ways, Inc. - \$20,000

Back on a Successful Road

Ludean Spears was only stopping into the **Community Action Agency of New Haven** (CAANH) to see if she might get help with her energy bills. A single mother, she'd lost her job and money was tight. The CAANH staff encouraged her to apply to be part of the **Single Mothers Actively Reaching the Top (S.M.A.R.T.)** program. She got more than she ever expected.

“I came in for one thing and ended up being part of a program that I know will be a lifelong resource,” Spears said. “They invite speakers in to talk about health, nutrition and healthy cooking. They teach us about financial literacy and the importance of good credit, how to maintain a bank account and how to work toward self-sufficiency and home ownership.”

Spears, who hopes to work in community health, likes being part of a 40-woman cohort “each with our own journeys re-entering the workforce,” she said. “We had the chance to talk about our lives, our burdens, or share information about other programs. It's a hub for women who need to unite with other women to get back on a successful road.”

The S.M.A.R.T. program was one of 10 Greater New Haven nonprofits to receive a **Pathways to Economic Security for Women** grant from the Fund for Women & Girls this year. The Fund is committed to addressing the economic disparities experienced by women — particularly women of color — by investing in programs and services that work to ensure economic stability.

Jenell M. Lawson, CAANH's deputy director and vice president of human resources, said

more than 650 women have gone through the S.M.A.R.T. program since it began 16 years ago. The program also provides meals to participants. “We found that moms on fixed incomes went hungry to feed their children,” Lawson said.

Some women in the program have experienced domestic violence or are unhoused or facing other crises. The nonprofit provides case management so women can receive the services they need. Participants take part in resume writing, mock interviews and a 40-hour internship. Some participants intern at CAANH, and others at nonprofits and companies the program partners with, including the **Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center**. Many are offered full time employment following their internship.

Lawson said the Pathways grant allowed CAANH to increase the number of educational field trips and outings “to show women the opportunities available to them in our area” and to expand the reach of the program so that more women could take part. “Without their support I don’t think we would have been able to serve the additional women,” she said. “The Fund for Women & Girls has been a blessing to our organization. We’re in the business of changing folks’ lives and when you can see the impact in real time, it does your heart good.”

Mishanda Harper, a graduate of S.M.A.R.T., said it has had an incredible impact. “I was a single mother and I’d lost my job,” Harper said. “I was going through a lot. The very first workshop our instructor held was about change. She said that to turn things around you have to change your perspective and look for the positive. The positive for me was being able to be part of this program. I met wonderful single moms that I’m still friends with. I interned at CAANH and that opened up the door for me to go back to get my associate’s degree.” Harper is now pursuing a bachelor’s degree in human services and social work at Albertus Magnus, and she started her own nonprofit, the **Single Mom’s Alliance Inc.** “That was the most important lesson I took from the S.M.A.R.T. program: there is something positive on the other side of this,” she said. “And there is.”

A Gender Lens at the Table

Representatives from 20 organizations gathered for the **Workforce Wraparound Supports Roundtable** in October. The event was co-facilitated in partnership with **The Community Foundation, The Prosperity Foundation** and **United Way of Greater New Haven**, and included nonprofit partners of the **Community Fund for Women & Girls**, allowing for a robust collective conversation about the often-overlooked needs of women in workforce programming.

Prominent at the table were six Fund for Women & Girls Pathways to Economic Security nonprofit partners: **All Our Kin; Collab; Havenly; Spanish Community of Wallingford; Urban Community Alliance;** and **Women and Family Life Center.**

Together, they networked, shared information about their work, talked about challenges, and discussed ways they could collaborate to bolster their services. The nonprofits also provided insights for a collaboration of local workforce funders. The event was a chance for organizations to plug into the expansive ecosystem of workforce development providers who prepare Greater New Haven area residents for employment, economic stability and growth, and to explore the essential wraparound services that are necessary to support individuals, and women in particular, in securing and maintaining employment and pursuing entrepreneurship.

“A program like this helps to inform the way we shape our requests for proposals and how we can support collaboration,” said Kara Straun, director of program and evaluation at The Community Foundation. “Having the Fund for Women & Girls’ nonprofit partners present supports an intersectional way of looking at workforce development that is critically needed.”



Mentoring in the Moment

A Year of Momentum for the Girls of Color Mentoring Network

They experimented with electricity conductivity and learned about coding patterns so they could make robots dance, spin and walk backwards. More than 40 girls — middle and high school students from Greater New Haven — took part in the Community Fund for Women & Girls' **Girls of Color Mentoring Network** (GOCMN) collaborative STEM event at the **Spanish Community of Wallingford** (SCOW) earlier this year run by the CT STEM Academy.

Jazmin Calvillo, a senior at Wallingford's Sheehan High School, teamed up with a partner and connected wires from a banana to a computer to turn the piece of fruit into a keyboard they could play music on. "That conductivity experiment took a lot of problem solving," she said. "It was also really fun."

Calvillo, who will be the first in her family to attend college, said the best part of the day was hearing from a group of speakers from the mentoring network, women of color who work in STEM fields including **Latisha Douglas**, a data scientist at Prudential Financial, and **Lisa Crutchfield Diggs**, Avangrid's director of IT operations, who talked about their career journeys. "They were really inspiring," Calvillo

said. "They showed me that as a woman I can do anything." **Randi McCray**, founder of RM Consulting Services Inc. and consulting facilitator of GOCMN, said that was the goal.

"Visibility is everything for girls and young women," McCray said. "You can't know you want to be something or have interest in being something unless you are exposed to it and if you see people like you doing it."

"We made sure that our stations were female-led, to have better connections and answer any of the girls' questions," said **Laura Juárez**, robotics director of CT STEM Academy, who helped facilitate the GOCMN STEM event at SCOW. "The girls were excited to hear and see that there is a place for them in the STEM field."

This has been a year full of momentum and promise for the network. In addition to fostering long-term mentoring connections, "we talked about mentoring in the moment," said McCray. "We create events and opportunities for young people to get advice, support and guidance and plant seeds for more opportunities."

McCray cited additional highlights of the year from member partners:

- **D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed, Inc.**

(D2S) held the YOUniquely Me! Girls' Empowerment & Career Readiness program, which focused on social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making and relationship skills.

- **Urban Community Alliance's**

executive director **Shirley Ellis-West**

presented data from a study on the impact of violence on girls and

"My experience with D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed (D2S) has been amazing. With each program, I've learned something new and something that will or already has benefited me in my life. One of the programs even gave me the chance to teach others younger than me life skills that I hope they take with them for the rest of their lives."

**ARIANNA,
10th GRADE**



Photo: Courtesy of Yvonne Jones



Fund Chair Christine Kim (front right) with members of the Girls of Color Mentoring Network.

women who live in New Haven, which found that violence is “pervasive in the lives of teen girls from distressed neighborhoods in New Haven.” Ellis-West shared how the network’s organizations can design interventions and support services. The study emphasized the importance of incorporating teens’ perspectives on violence into training programs for adult professionals.

• **Randi McCray**, GOCMN facilitator and social justice educator, partnered with **Brittany Baines**, executive director of Network member **Phenomenal I Am** and project manager of the Governor’s Prevention Partnership. They developed and presented a two-day social justice workshop for young people on the weekend of Juneteenth, teaching them how to run their own social justice/activism webinars for their peers. McCray said that led to a number of young women joining Girls of Color Mentoring Network organizations.

McCray said she sees continued growth ahead because of the dynamic collaboration. “We have all of these individuals coming together,” she said. “We’re able to tap into their lived experiences to serve as visible proof of what is possible for young women.”

Adriana Rodriguez, **SCOW**’s executive director, noted how the Girls of Color Mentoring Network and collaborative events like STEM Day give girls and young women the chance to collaborate, network and make friends across communities. Jazmin Calvillo has been part of SCOW since she took part in a youth leadership program when she was a freshman. “It allowed me to improve my leadership and communication skills,” she said. “I’ve always been on the quieter side.”

She volunteers at SCOW and at the CT STEM Academy where she works with elementary school students at family STEM events.

Being part of the Network exponentially expands the number of events and activities available to young women who are part of each of the member organizations. “That is so needed,” Rodriguez said.

“On a personal level, I’ve met additional colleagues I can reach out to for advice or to talk about grant opportunities or to find out what’s going on in their communities,” Rodriguez added. “We are all very grateful to the Fund for Women & Girls and everyone who helped spearhead this network.”

2023 Girls of Color Mentoring Network

CMWP Foundation

D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D. to Succeed, Inc.

National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

New Haven Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc

Phenomenal I Am, Inc.

Spanish Community of Wallingford

Theta Epsilon Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Urban Community Alliance

Advisory Board Spotlight: Barbara Chesler

Departing Advisory Board Member Reflects on the Fund's Evolution Over 20+ Years of Service

"In the early years we were giving out grants of \$750 or \$1,000 — a very big grant was \$2,500," Barbara Chesler said. "The Fund for Women & Girls has come such a long way thanks to the power and work of so many incredible women."

Those early grants proved to have extraordinary impact and reach. The nonprofit partners receiving them included All Our Kin, which provides training and services for 1,100 family childcare providers who educate more than 6,000 children, the Diaper Bank of Connecticut, and Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services — all of which continue to help thousands of women, children and families and have become national models in the work they do, said Chesler. A member of the Fund for Women & Girls Advisory Board and the grants committee, Chesler has been part of the Fund for more than 20 years.

This year the Fund awarded over \$200,000 in grants for economic security, mentoring girls and policy research.

Chesler was drawn to the Fund when she was the senior associate athletics director at Yale, where for 30 years she oversaw Yale's 35 varsity sports and helped establish the first Yale endowment to benefit women's athletics.

"With my background in college athletics and Title IX, I've always been a strong advocate for women and girls, so I knew I wanted to be part of the Fund," she said. "One of my goals at Yale was not only to serve Yale but to be part of the larger community."



Reviewing grant applications for possible funding "opened my eyes to all the good work being done at nonprofits all over Greater New Haven and the great need in the community as well," she said.

She is proud of the Fund's evolution over the years, and its work to identify strategic investments in longer-term opportunities that support the economic mobility and advancement of women and girls, and to find new organizations that will impact Greater New Haven for years to come.

Now, after more than two decades of service, Chesler is stepping back. She is excited about all that is ahead for the Fund and about the women who will lead it. "There are lots of new women who will be a tremendous asset to the Fund," she said. "Greater New Haven is filled with very talented and strong-minded women who care about the community. That's the number one criterion — caring deeply about the community."

Considering a gift to The Fund? THANK YOU!

The Community Fund for Women & Girls is Greater New Haven's only endowment promoting the social and economic advancement of women and girls. We can do what we do because of the continued support from our community.

To gift retirement assets or appreciated securities or to create your own individually named fund, please contact Sharon at 203-777-7071. To make a credit card donation, please scan the QR code or visit fundforwomenandgirls.org. Checks are gratefully accepted using the enclosed envelope.





(L-R) Dr. Khalilah Brown-Dean, Karen DuBois-Walton, Emily Byrne, Michelle Riordan-Nold, Jenny Steadman and Karen Lott at the podcast panel event at Quinnipiac University.

Disrupting Gender Inequity

Panel Unpacks CTDData Collaborative's New "Elusive Equity" Report at Podcast Event

As she began taping her show before a live audience on November 14, CT Public's Disrupted podcast host Dr. Khalilah Brown-Dean decided to go off script.

"Let's take a moment to take a deep breath because we have the opportunity to learn about this important report and the many ways women and girls are struggling in Connecticut, but also women and girls are thriving — not because of, but in spite of some of the forces organizing against them," she said.

The discussion focused on the **CTData Collaborative's** report **"Elusive Equity: Continuing Effects of the Pandemic on Women's Economic Security."**

The study was a follow up to "Essential Equity: Women, COVID-19 and Rebuilding CT," a report which examined the impact of the pandemic on women and girls.

"Elusive Equity" was commissioned and funded by the **Community Fund for Women & Girls** and the **Aurora Foundation** to gather data to see how women, particularly women of color, are navigating the post-pandemic economic landscape.

Michelle Riordan-Nold, executive director of the CTDData Collaborative, shared findings. The panelists included Karen DuBois-Walton, president of Elm City Communities; Karen Lott,

executive director of the Women's League Child Development Center; Emily Byrne, executive director of Connecticut Voices for Children; and Jenny Steadman, executive director of Aurora.

Brown-Dean said she hoped audience members would walk away asking "What can I do? What can we do?" to make change around the issues highlighted in the report.

Panelists echoed that charge. DuBois-Walton said it's vitally important people have access to fair wages, affordable, inclusive housing and affordable childcare allowing them to "pay for other things, to have fun and joy. All of that is part of a life and that should be available to everyone at any income."

"I would remind us we are not without agency," Byrne said. "We have the choice to make Connecticut a better state. Women are just simply amazing. We're industrious, resilient, caring and even when systems are designed to keep us down, we figure out a way to rise above them. Imagine what we could do if the decks were stacked for us, that's the message we should all be sharing when we talk about policies that support women."

Hear a recording of the conversation, download the "Elusive Equity" report, and find more resources at cfgnh.org/Disrupting.

Elusive Equity
Continuing Effects
of the Pandemic
on Women's
Economic Security

AURORA
Foundation
CTdata
The Community Fund for
WOMEN & GIRLS





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