

## Groups receive \$1.8M in grants

By Lisa Chamoff  
Staff Writer

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The Fairfield County Community Foundation recently awarded \$1.18 million in grants to several local nonprofit organizations that deal with education and social issues, and funded a new regional initiative to improve transportation planning.

Groups in Fairfield County received nearly \$800,000. The funds are overseen by the foundation's board, which targets specific community needs.

Several groups receiving funds are based in Stamford and Norwalk.

The Wilton-based foundation awarded \$45,000, its largest discretionary grant, to CTE Inc., a community-action agency in Stamford, which is joining with Norwalk Community College to launch an English as a Second Language Institute for residents of Stamford's South End and Waterside neighborhoods.

Karen Brown, the Fairfield County Community Foundation's program director, said it was a good opportunity for residents to have access to ESL classes close by, and that it gives NCC an opportunity to branch out from its Norwalk campus.

"This is just such an important issue, and we need to have more people be able to access, in a user-friendly way, ESL classes," Brown said.

A \$35,000 grant will go toward a newly formed collaborative of foundations from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut to promote a "more sustainable" transportation system.

"This is something that local foundations haven't previously been involved in," said Yolanda Caldera-Durant, program officer for the Fairfield County Community Foundation. "Groups would be supporting the work of nonprofit organizations to, for instance, conduct a regional bus system study."

The collaborative will touch on issues such as the environment and social equity, which includes creating better access for low-income residents and seniors so they can travel, Caldera-Durant said.

A \$30,000 grant will help Liberation Programs in Stamford continue a program to help clients with mental health disorders and substance-abuse problems. Previously, the nonprofit agency had focused mainly on substance-abuse prevention and treatment.

Tina Klem, the vice president of lower Fairfield County outpatient services for Liberation

Programs, said the foundation helped finance a successful pilot of the program, but that the organization has recently had to pay for it from its own limited funds.

The grant will help the organization provide mental health screenings by a licensed clinical social worker and provide prescriptions and monitoring of medication on-site.

"We were able to run this on our own, but that became increasingly difficult for us," Klem said. "This will help out tremendously."

In Norwalk, an \$18,000 grant to the Courage to Speak Foundation will support the development of a drug-prevention curriculum for elementary school students. This is the foundation's third grant to Courage to Speak.

Ginger Katz, who founded Courage to Speak in 1996 after her son Ian died of a heroin overdose, had already created a drug-prevention program targeting seventh- and ninth-graders.

Katz said the funding will help attract well-known drug-prevention experts to oversee the program, which will target the fourth grade and will be based on a book written by Katz. The effort, which also includes activities, will have a pilot program at Brookside Elementary School next month.

"We're finding that in elementary school, kids are introduced to smoking and inhalants," Katz said. "The earlier we start, the . . . more receptive they are."

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