

Wonder of Women highlights what grants do for the community

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BRISTOL - The Women & Girls' Fund's 18th annual Wonder of Women event was a celebration of the theme of "moving forward together."

The fund is a community-based endowment of the Main Street Community Foundation.

The evening, held April 23 at the Aqua Turf in Southington, was filled with sharing stories about the impact the WOW has had over the past 18 years due to the generosity of donors and advocates who support the event year after year.

It began with speakers from grantee organizations that work to improve the lives of women and girls in the communities the fund serves - Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington, and Wolcott.

Amy Blackwood, from the John J. Driscoll United Labor Agency, shared how a grant from the fund supported their Building Pathways to CT program to train women for a career in the building trades.

Courtney Dollar, of St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol, recalled how the grant her organization was awarded supported housing for women and girls.

"We are so grateful to all those who continue to support the annual WOW event each year. Proceeds from this event will enable us to award grants to local organizations and impact the lives of so many residents," said Jeanine Audette, co-chair of the 2019 WOW event.

This year's guest speaker was Colleen Kelly Alexander, a lifelong athlete and motivational speaker, who survived being run over by a freight truck in 2011, spending five weeks in a coma, and enduring 29 surgeries.

She shared her story with an audience of 400 and spoke about how "we are all connected like the spokes of a bike wheel to aim higher, be stronger, and use adversity as a catalyst to make the world a better, brighter place. Just like the spokes of the wheel, it keeps us moving forward together."



Submitted by the Women & Girls' Fund From left are: Dawn Nielsen, Colleen Kelly Alexander, and Jeanine Audette. Nielsen and Audette were co-chairs of the 18th annual Wonder of Women evening, where Alexander was guest speaker.

“Last year the Women & Girls’ Fund was able to award over \$55,000 to local organizations, thanks in large part to the success of the WOW event,” said Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation.

“And not only that, but the WOW event is always incredibly powerful and fun, bringing individuals together who are passionate about improving the lives of their neighbors,” Sadecki said.

Since 2001, the fund has awarded over \$500,000 in grants and immediate response funds to over 85 local organizations benefiting women and girls in its six communities.

Susan Corica can be reached at 860-973-1802 or scorica@bristolpress.com.