

New fund at the Main Street Community Foundation awards its first grant

Published: Thursday, 15 August 2019 19:05

@brianjohnsonBP

BRISTOL – A new fund at the Main Street Community Foundation, the Geoffrey M. Pierce Memorial Fund, made its first grant to BEST-4-Bristol Thursday to assist with their youth substance abuse prevention efforts.

The check presentation was made at the council chambers in City Hall. Christina Sanchez, project coordinator with BEST-4-Bristol, and youth leaders were on-hand to accept it from Main Street Community Foundation staff. Also in attendance were friends of Geoffrey Pierce, who established the fund after he died from an overdose in 2016. Also participating were members of the local NAACP.



Brian Johnson Staff The Geoffrey M. Pierce Memorial Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation makes its first grant to BEST-4-Bristol to assist with youth substance abuse prevention. The grant was for \$220.

Greg Fortier, one of Pierce's friends, said he was glad to make the donation.

"I think he'd be proud of us," said Fortier. "He was a giver and I think he'd appreciate what we're doing."

Fortier said Pierce loved baseball and played for Bristol Eastern High School as well as for the American Legion. Thus, after his death, friends and family members decided to hold Wiffle Ball fundraisers. The first year raised money to assist the family with the cost of rehabilitation programs. The subsequent years were used to raise money to establish the fund. Each year, he said the fundraisers collected between \$5,000 and \$6,000. Fortier said Rep. Whit Betts' wife, Jarre Betts, encouraged him to reach out to the Main Street Community Foundation.

"We wanted for it to be local and long-lasting," said Fortier. "The Main Street Community Foundation can do both."

"That's really something – that's amazing; thank you so much for all of your efforts," said Sanchez. "We're really honored to be picked to receive this donation. This fund really resonates with our message. We will do you proud and do our best to prevent substance abuse in Bristol."

Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation, explained how the foundation is able to set up "legacy" funds in people's memory to the youth leaders.

"We make grants to uplift the community, whether for arts and culture, animal welfare or drug prevention," explained Sadecki. "We provide \$1.7 million a year in grants and the foundation will be 25 years old next year."

The youth leaders in turn later put on a power point presentation explaining BEST-4-Bristol. Sanchez said the point of having youth leaders is because kids are more likely to listen to their peers than to adults.

“By changing their environment, we hope to change their way of thinking,” she said.

Sadecki said she is proud the foundation is supporting BEST-4-Bristol and said the grant would be going to something “very important” in the community. She added she is proud of young citizens for getting involved in drug prevention efforts.

BEST-4-Bristol meets the third Thursday of every month from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Bristol Public Library at 5 High St. Their meetings are open to the public.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-973-1806 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.