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Main Street Community Foundation funds 8 local projects





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SOUTHINGTON — The Main Street Community Foundation has recently awarded \$23,530 in grants to eight different organizations across the Southington and Bristol area to benefit the residents of both communities.

The grants were awarded as part of MSCF's general grant cycle — having already awarded \$144,200 this year to 44 different local organizations providing services to towns throughout the local region.

Several of the organizations who received funding were Connecticut Foodshare, which received \$3,720 for their mobile food pantry; the Southington Northern Little League, which was granted \$3,000 for the construction of a dedicated T-ball field; the Southington United Way, which was awarded \$3,350 for a technology upgrade project; and the Tabernacle Christian Church, which received the largest grant amount of \$4,000 for the Giving Back Food Pantry program that provides groceries to food-insecure residents of Southington.

The Southington Library also received a \$1,460 grant to buy supplies to kickstart a new programming block, the Building Equitable Library Opportunities for Neurodivergent Groups — or BELONG — program. The goal of the initiative is to provide neurodivergent and handicapped individuals with new accessible activity blocks as part of the library's schedule.

The grants were awarded to the different organizations following an evaluation from the MSCF of the organizations and their projects. The goal was to determine which of them were worth investments based on the potential positive community impact.

“I think that we are in a position to fund those important emerging needs that are identified by our local nonprofit organizations. And so our ability to partner with the local nonprofit organizations to bring these types of programs and solve these types of challenges in our community is what a community foundation is all about,” MSCF President Susan Sadecki said, “None of the work that we do at the community foundation would be possible without the donors who have established these funds. So really we’re carrying out the legacy of many, many people that they felt it was important to leave a permanent gift in central Connecticut.”

The MSCF oversees 275 different funds and contributes the scope of their outreach work to the breadth of generous donations that they’ve received over the years. This allows them to provide large amounts of money to a broad range of causes.



Part of their general grant process this season, Sadecki said, was that organizations could apply for funding for whatever projects they were interested in undertaking. This way, nonprofits across the community could seek funds based on their specific needs — and MSCF pulled from whichever grants best suit that purpose.

“For us to be able to respond to those changing needs, we need to be able to listen to our nonprofits. And this is just one way that we do that, through the general grant application process,” Sadecki said.

For example, the grant for BELONG will allow for instructors to purchase supplies and assistive technology for the neurodivergent people in attendance. A broad range of activities fall under BELONG, from a pottery class, film club and travel program to craft and bingo nights.

Librarian Lynn Pawloski and Adult Program Coordinator Elizabeth Chubet were inspired to implement such programs at the library after seeing the sort of activities done by the Southington Arc, which provides services to those with disabilities. Already having held several activities under the BELONG

banner, the library will be hosting a film club event on August 15. Interested participants are encouraged to register ahead of time online.

“People experience and interact with the world in a lot of different ways. So BELONG is actually a programming series specifically for adults with intellectual, developmental and psychiatric differences,” Pawloski said, “We felt that that demographic was just a group that we really wanted to feel welcome in the library, a part of their community, and to just experience the same kind of programming that everyone else comes to.”

Some of the technology that the library is utilizing for the program are Reader Pens, which act as highlighters that people with dyslexia can drag over the text to read it aloud. This helps them with comprehension and literacy skills. Other assistive technology, toys, and games are being borrowed from the State Education Resource Center.

MSCF and Sadecki were inspired by Pawloski’s idea, and were more than happy to offer them a grant to further diversify the library’s programming.

“I love the grant to the Southington Public Library. I think that particular initiative is unique. I love when organizations put together some very unique applications, and we're able to provide the funding for those because they can't otherwise diversify their offerings if they don't have a funder like the Main Street Community Foundation to go to,” Sadecki said.

“We are so grateful to Main Street Community Foundation,” Pawloski added, noting that she decided to pursue MSCF for funds after last year, when they helped with another grant to fund the “Literacy of Laughter” program to host standup comedy workshops at the Southington Arc. “I was so thankful for them for giving the funds for Literacy of Laughter and what that little bit could do for that population at the Arc.”

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