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Recipients of grant money awarded at the Women & Girls Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation. | Alexa Furniss.

POSTED BY: LAURA BAILEY JANUARY 29, 2026

by Alexa Furniss | TBE correspondent | Jan 29, 2026 |

The Women & Girls Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation had much to celebrate this past Thursday at their reception. What started as an idea discussed in a living room 25 years ago has now blossomed into a catalyst of positive change, helping to support women in every stage of life.

The foundation, which began in 2001, aims at improving the lives for women living in Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington, and Wolcott. It uses a permanent endowment from the Main Street Community Foundation to support programs and educate the community on the needs of women and girls.

At their annual reception, the foundation awarded \$59,150 in grant distributions from their fund to grantees this year and celebrated 25 years of establishment. The Women & Girls Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation is also just \$79,000 away from granting \$1 million, with a total of \$921,000 being granted currently.

“Our goal is to give out \$1 million within the next few years, and we’re at \$921,000 right now. So we’re getting really close. We only have \$79,000 to go,” said Lisa Palen, secretary for the Women & Girls Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation.

It was announced that the original endowment goal, that was set in a living room upon creating the foundation, has been exceeded. The goal was set for \$500,000 and is now over \$1

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“You know, goals are meant to be set, and then they’re meant to be surpassed,” said Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Women & Girls Fund of the Main Street Foundation.

“Now the Women and Girls Fund endowment is well over a million dollars. And we are so proud of that accomplishment, and it’s because of all of the wonderful donors and some unexpected bequest that came in along the way on this 25 year journey.”

The \$59,150 in grants were awarded to 12 nonprofit organizations. These grants were given to the Boys & Girls Club of Bristol, Bristol Family Resource Centers, BristolWORKS!, Community Counseling Centers of Central Connecticut, Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut, PARC, Plainville Youth Services, Plymouth Community Pantry, Prudence Crandell Center INC., Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center INC., The Carousel Museum, and The YWCA of New Britain.

These nonprofit organizations work hard to ensure no women or girls are left behind, helping to uplift each other through difficult times. Their goals range from senior women care to nature-based therapy.

“There is domestic violence, therapy, self care, older women care, and wellness. It really spans the whole gamut of what sort of needs that are in our community,” said Palen. “We are very proud to partner with many of these organizations for multiple years because the need is out there.”

“It’s very important the work that these folks are doing, and the funding that they get outside of our funding have seen major cuts,” said Palen. “So our funding is helpful for them to continue doing what they love to do and what they’re good at.”

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donor contributions and volunteer, the event will be held April 30, at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville, with seats starting at \$75 per person.

Members of the Women and Girls Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation reflected on the past 25 years of leadership and growth, showing how far they had come within the foundation, as well as personally.

“I came to one WOW event 15 years ago and when I heard what was being done, I said, I have to be a part of this,” said Palen. “I had a small child at the time and a small girl and I said, you know what? What better example can I be for my daughter to show her that women working together, we can help each other. It was so important to me to be part of this, and I’ve been part of it for many years, and I will continue it as long as I can. I love it.”

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