

# Connecting donors who care with causes that matter

In its 68 years of giving, the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain has helped improve countless lives. It has also helped save some.

Two Community Foundation grants in recent years have supported expansion and renovation of The Hospital of Central Connecticut's Emergency Department, ensuring the hospital is ready, 24/7, to treat everything from cuts and bruises to heart attacks and other life-threatening emergencies.

"When we're considering funding requests, two things we ask are, 'Will it benefit the entire community?' and, 'Is the project meeting a need?'" says James G. Williamson, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain president. "There's no question the Emergency Department projects met both criteria."

Both Community Foundation grants for the ED, \$150,000 in 2004, and \$50,000 in 2008, were challenge grants that matched hospital employee donations.

"The wonderful response the hospital received from its employees and physicians clearly motivated us to support these projects," Williamson says.

So did the statistics on emergency department use.

Locally and nationwide, more and more people have been using EDs as their main source of care. Many of those people are uninsured or have insufficient health insurance coverage.

They're the kinds of people the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain was established to help. The Community Foundation's founding purpose was — and continues to be — to provide a permanent "safety net" for the community.

The Community Foundation (then called the New Britain Foundation for Public Giving) started in 1941, with \$30,000 in gifts from The Stanley Works and New Britain Machine.

In 2004 its name was changed to the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain to reflect its service to four communities: New Britain, Berlin, Plainville and Southington.

Now one of the oldest community foundations in the country, the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain has assets totaling \$26 million and awards nearly \$1 million annually to support health, social services, education, arts and culture, civic affairs, community and economic development and the environment.

It does so through more than 150 different funds, including scholarship funds, discretionary funds and The Catalyst Fund, in which donors join to pool their resources and make grants as a group. The Community Foundation also has 28

donor-advised funds, established by individuals, families or local businesses.

In 1997, Marie Gustin established a donor-advised fund, The Susie and Charles Gustin Memorial Fund, in memory of her parents. The Fund donates to The Hospital of Central Connecticut, Hospital for Special Care and education and art initiatives in the city.

"I have very high regard for The Hospital of Central Connecticut," says Gustin, former New Britain Schools superintendent and a member of the hospital's board of directors. "My parents received good care, and I'm glad the hospital was there when we needed it."

She's grateful for the Community Foundation's assistance, which allowed her to establish a fund that supports her community and honors her parents' generous spirit.

"My parents were the sunshine in my life," she says. "Hopefully, through the grants we've made through the Community Foundation, we can bring rays of hope to other people."

The Gustin Fund is one of several Community Foundation donor-advised funds that benefit The Hospital of Central Connecticut, along with other local organizations.

These funds highlight one of the unique features — and strengths — of community foundations, Williamson says. In addition to supporting organizations in need, community foundations provide expertise and assistance to donors — everything from research to help with legal and financial matters.

"We're like the Swiss Army Knife of philanthropy. We have all these little tools we can use to help donors," Williamson says.

That assistance is highly personalized, he adds.

"Before any grants are made, we have long conversations with donors about their intent. Some donors know exactly where they want their money to go; others ask us to help identify a need in the community and which organizations are addressing it."

Recently, the Community Foundation was contacted by a donor who had left New Britain, but still wanted to help families in need here. After talking at length with the donor, Community Foundation staff did some research and matched the donor with the Mayor's Work Plan to End Homelessness in New Britain.

"That's what we do at the Community Foundation," Williamson says. "We connect donors who care with causes that matter." \*