

First County Bank Foundation awards \$44,620 in grants to Norwalk nonprofits

By First County Bank Foundation

In its continuing mission to give back to the communities of lower Fairfield County, the First County Bank Foundation recently announced the distribution of \$44,620 in grants to Norwalk-based nonprofits devoted to helping children and families cope with unemployment, housing and child safety.

Established in 2001 in honor of the bank's 150th anniversary, the First County Bank Foundation was created to distribute funds annually to nonprofit organizations that support community and economic development for children and families. As a mutual bank with no shareholders, First County Bank considers contributions made by the foundation a means of paying dividends back to the local communities it serves. Through 2009, the foundation has been able to award 343 grants totaling \$3.5 million to various community organizations.

"This tough economy has had a serious impact on many families in Fairfield County. As part of First County Bank's efforts to give back to the communities we serve, these grants represent a small portion of what's needed on a regular basis to help the people of Norwalk," said First County Bank Foundation Vice President Katherine Harris. "In fact, in our ongoing effort to expand the number of grant recipients, this year marks the first time the foundation has donated money to Courage to Speak Foundation and Norwalk Hospital Foundation," Harris added.

To be eligible, organizations must have nonprofit tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; be located in Stamford, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk or Westport; have community support; address community needs; have measurable outcomes; and demonstrate fiscal and administrative responsibility. Special consideration is given to those agencies or programs benefiting low to moderate income populations.

Although the deadline for applying for First County Bank Foundation grants has passed, a new short-form application, available April 1 until the end of the year, is available at http://www.firstcounty.com/Foundation_Application_r3.pdf. Short-form applications are defined as grants of \$2,500 or less for those applicants who fit the regular grant criteria, and \$1,000 or less for those applicants that do not fit the regular grant criteria.

The following Norwalk-based organizations received grants from First County Bank Foundation:

Organization/Grant Amount/Cause:

Courage to Speak Foundation Inc.
\$10,120

The Courage to Speak Foundation Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save lives by empowering youth to be drug free through fostering education and open communication about the dangers of drug and alcohol use.

Family & Children's Agency Inc.
\$10,000

Family & Children's Agency meets the needs of more than 10,000 individuals --including children, adults and

families -- throughout Fairfield County and beyond. Skilled professionals serve clients in seven primary impact areas: youth development, family strengthening, foster care, adoption, behavioral health, homeless service and services for seniors. Eighty-nine cents of every dollar given to FCA directly benefits those in need in its communities.

Norwalk Emergency Shelter, Inc. Open Door Shelter
\$10,000

The Norwalk Emergency Shelter is a not-for-profit organization located at 4 Merritt Street in Norwalk. Founded in 1983, it provides 95 + beds for homeless men, women and families. It also assist shelter residents in searching for housing, jobs, counseling and treatment, while seeking to foster independence and responsibility among its residents. Through Manna House, its soup kitchen, the Norwalk Emergency Shelter serves more than 12,579 meals a month. The shelter also provides free clothing and furniture to its clients.

Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County
\$5,000

The Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County offers a full-range of prevention, evaluation, and treatment services to address virtually every facet of a child's psychological, behavioral, and emotional health.

Norwalk Hospital Foundation
\$5,000

The mission of Norwalk Hospital Foundation is to generate philanthropy and awareness to support Norwalk Hospital in being a leader in advanced medical care for the region. Philanthropy supports world class medical care to meet the highest level patient expectations.

STAR Inc.
\$4,500

For over 50 years, STAR Inc., Lighting the Way... has been assisting thousands of infants, teens and adults with developmental disabilities. Beginning at birth, children with special needs receive early intervention services until the age of three. From age three, they receive family and transitional services to prepare them for entry into their school district(s) or home school(s). STAR also provides family and sibling support, after-school activities and assistance by sponsoring and locating camp programs.

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