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*News for Darien*

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## **\$100K Grant Awarded for Darien Youth Substance Abuse/Mental Health Program**

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**Categories :** [Community Organizations](#), [Parents & Kids](#)

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**Date :** October 27, 2015

The Community Fund of Darien has received a competitive annual grant of \$100,000 for the next five years to implement a strategic prevention plan to reduce substance abuse and improve mental health among Darien's youth and their parents.

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— *an announcement (slightly edited) from* [the Community Fund of Darien](#)

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With this grant, the State of Connecticut recognizes The Community Fund's prevention and asset-development work with the Thriving Youth Initiative and the student asset survey.

The Community Fund of Darien will dedicate resources to engage the whole community in a long-term plan to promote positive youth development and mental health.

"We are thrilled to be a recipient of this important prevention grant. It allows us to collaborate town-wide with leaders working with youth and to invest on a deeper level in our Thriving Youth Task Force," said Executive Director Carrie Bernier.

"Together, we will integrate positive assets into our town's culture and our interactions with youth, with the aim of improving mental health, resiliency and reducing substance abuse," Bernier said.

This grant will strengthen The Community Fund's collaborative efforts to work with the forty-two members of the Thriving Youth Task Force.

"The key to Darien's success will be collaboration among the many groups that provide services to youth," Bernier said. "This effort will be youth-driven and involve youth leaders from a broad cross-section of town. Our goal is to achieve measurable outcomes in promoting mental health and reducing substance abuse among teens and their parents."

Darien was awarded the grant by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to support The Community Fund's work to promote the "40 Developmental Assets," which are evidence-based building blocks for healthy youth.

The Community Fund administered a survey of Darien Public School 7th-12th graders to quantify the "assets" students possess in 2008, 2011 and in November, 2014. The results were shared in a public forum at Darien Library in April.

The survey revealed some alarming trends, namely that substance abuse was on the rise among teens and resilience/resistance skills seemed to be declining instead of improving. With this grant, The Community Fund of Darien will implement a strategic prevention framework using a public health model.

"The Darien Community Fund's Thriving Youth initiative has opened an important community dialogue about the causes and life-altering consequences of risky behaviors," First Selectman Jayme Stevenson said.

"Incidents of alcohol and substance use and abuse are alarmingly on the rise here in Darien among our youth," she said. "I'm grateful for the State of Connecticut's investment in our efforts to bring community partners together to help address this disturbing public health crisis and to deepen our commitment to building healthy assets and resilience in our children."

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**About the Community Fund of Darien**

For over 65 years, The Community Fund of Darien's mission has been to help Darien and our neighbors in Stamford and Norwalk by investing in programs aimed at improving the quality of life for all.

In addition to its community initiatives, The Community Fund of Darien awards grants to local nonprofits helping to address a broad spectrum of vital human services including mental health, substance abuse, at-risk youth, homelessness, hunger, child abuse, special needs and more.

For more information, please contact The Community Fund of Darien office at 203-655-8775 or visit [the organization's website](#).