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News for Darien

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'Barnraising' Event Raises \$15K for Mather Homestead Foundation's New Education Center

Author : David Gurliacci

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The Mather Homestead Foundation celebrated the opening of its recently completed Elizabeth W. Chilton Education Center on Sept. 19 with an outdoor picnic-style fundraising event.

— *an announcement from the* [Mather Homestead Foundation](#)

While the event was capped at 100 guests, pursuant to state guidelines, it raised nearly \$15,000, which will aid in the project's completion.

"We enjoyed fun live music from Sweet Colleen and the Poor Excuses (bluegrass!), gourmet boxed dinners from TOASTs, specialty cocktails from SoNo1420, and wine from DB Wines in New Canaan all under the beautiful starry night," the Mather Foundation said on its website.

Earlier this year, the foundation completed the “barn” — the Chilton Education Center — which will allow Mather Homestead to expand its programming to include scholars’ lectures, art exhibits concerts, films and even yoga classes.

The 1,800-square-foot structure was built to resemble an 18th-century dairy barn on the exterior but with an open interior floor plan for gatherings of up to 150 people.

It includes significant wall space for exhibits, a small efficiency kitchen, bathrooms compliant with the American Disability Act and large doors to open to the outside.

The construction was made possible by the generosity of the Chilton family, a generous \$75,000 grant from The Darien Foundation, as well as donations from 80 community members and counting.

Chilton did the honors at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, and in attendance were members of the McPherson family; Ward Glassmeyer, chairman of the board of the Darien Foundation; Sarah Woodberry, the foundation's executive director; First Selectman, Jayme Stevenson; and state Rep. Terrie Wood.

Immediately following the ceremony, event guests enjoyed a video, now online, which presented the story of the homestead, built in 1778 and now a National Historic Landmark.

Woodberry said the new education center “will allow more educational programming and opportunities for the community to engage with the history of the Mather Homestead, without increasing the usage or foot traffic in this exquisitely preserved National Historic Landmark.”

“We really could not have asked for a better night,” said Lauren Swenson, executive director of the foundation. Between the major contributions and the money raised by the fundraiser, “we are that much closer to reaching our goal of becoming a pre-eminent center for historical education.”

The Elizabeth W. Chilton Education Center was named after board chairman Richard L. Chilton Jr.’s late mother, a historical preservationist.

“I like to dream and this barn is the most pivotal beginning part of that dream,” Chilton said. “The Elizabeth Chilton Education Center will be the hub, the working organ, of the Mather Homestead Foundation, to be able to supply educational outreach,” he said.

He also shared an anecdote about being instructed by his mother as a small boy in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey to sit on the roof of a historic home to keep it from being destroyed by wrecking balls. That home, the Hermitage, then became the first National Historic Landmark in New Jersey.

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Donations to the Homestead Barn may be made on the Mather Homestead website. All donors making contributions before the end of the month over \$250 will be recognized on their donor wall.

About Mather Homestead

The Mather Homestead of Darien was built in 1778 and owned by the Mather family through seven generations, until 2017 when it was donated to the Mather Homestead Foundation, thanks to the generosity of the McPherson family.

The home open for public enjoyment and education around 18th century history and the legacy of Stephen Mather.

The Mather Homestead Foundation's mission is to the preserve of the Mather Homestead as a place for public enjoyment and education around 18th century history and the legacy of Stephen Mather.

For more information about the Mather Homestead: visit [the homestead website](#), Facebook [timeline](#), Instagram [account](#) or Twitter [account](#).

About The Darien Foundation

Since 1998, The Darien Foundation has awarded over \$4.5 million in grants for technology and capital initiatives, which create opportunity for Darien's youth, support our town's safety and security services, and enhance the overall quality of life in Darien.

The foundation's volunteer Board of Directors evaluates grant requests, and assist grant recipients in achieving their goals. Public donations are directed to supporting grants, as all operating costs have been funded by board member and officer contributions.

Most recently, The Darien Foundation has awarded grants to The Darien Police Department, The Depot Youth Center, Person-to-Person, and TV79.

For more information about the [Darien Foundation](#), visit [the foundation's website](#), Facebook timeline, Instagram [page](#) or Twitter [account](#).