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## **Community Fund of Darien Appoints Heather Gordon as New Youth Program Manager**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

**Categories :** [Community Organizations](#)

**Tagged as :** [Heather Gordon](#), [TCF 2020](#), [The Community Fund of Darien 2020](#)

**Date :** September 16, 2020

The Community Fund of Darien has added a new staff position — youth program manager — to oversee and coordinate TCF's four student youth groups.

The first manager is Heather Gordon, also works in the Noroton Presbyterian Church's Youth Ministry. She has years of experience as a volunteer in organizations, including youth-oriented groups.

*From the announcement, written by two TCF summer interns, Darien students Isabelle Garrett and Alyse Wright-Webb:*

Heather is an extremely involved volunteer, having previously partnered with organizations such as Young Life, Trinity Church, Save the Children, and the YMCA.

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“Heather’s experience and genuine enthusiasm are a compliment to the Community Fund of Darien’s mission to inspire people and mobilize resources to strengthen our community,” said Janet King, the Community Fund’s executive director.

“Heather will lead our youth groups to better understand local philanthropy and human service needs. We are delighted that Heather has joined our team!”

A Pepperdine University graduate and Norwalk native, Heather is also working with Noroton Presbyterian Church as their Youth Ministry associate and is currently pursuing a Master’s Degree in Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary.

She starts the new job this fall.

About her motivation to become involved with TCF, Heather said:

“In high school, my youth group was the first place I truly felt loved and accepted, which was in many ways due to my wonderful mentors. From then on, I knew my dream was to help change the world through meaningful relationships and be this role model for others.”

### **About Community Fund of Darien Student Groups**

#### **Youth Community Fund**

The Youth Community Fund, open to 10th to 12th graders, introduces students to philanthropy and the role of nonprofits in our community.

The group volunteers and evaluates local organizations and allocates money it raises to those that it deems most in need. The YCF has awarded grants over \$13,500 this year.

“It’s wonderful to learn how we can help our neighbors both through volunteerism and through a formal grant allocation process,” YCF member Ally Noonan said.

#### **Youth Asset Team**

The Youth Asset Team (YAT) is another educational program the Community Fund of Darien offers to 10th to 12th graders. Students meet biweekly to discuss healthy choices, mental health, and continue to educate other teenagers and adults about substance and alcohol abuse in the community.

“Youth Asset Team has impacted me tremendously because of the opportunities it has given me to grow as a person,” said Katie Chandler, one of the upcoming presidents of YAT. “The meetings are a place where students can have real conversations about issues in our community and make a difference. YAT allows students to gain confidence and leadership skills which is why it’s such an important group.”

The Youth Asset Team strives both to help and educate the community, and develop the leadership skills of students in the program.

### **Freshman Community Group**

The Freshman Community Group, just for 9th grade students, helps support them as they navigate the transition to high school. It also serves as an introduction to the Youth Community Fund and the Youth Asset Team.

The group is centered around engaging meetings with Andrew Tepper, the YAT advisor and a LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) as well as community service projects.

### **Youth Give Back**

In the Youth Give Back program for 7th and 8th grade students, middle schoolers are able to learn about community problems and create solutions or ways to help while getting hands-on experiences through visits to local shelters and organizations.

“Ideally, it’s a more personal way of giving back to our neighbors,” said Sandi Sufrin, a mother of a Youth Give Back student and a current adult advisor of the program. “A side effect would be to create a love of volunteering and giving back to their community.”

With the many student and adult volunteers, the middle schoolers are able to learn firsthand their impact within the community as well as build relationships with students who are passionate about helping and learning to serve others.

### **About TCF**

[The Community Fund of Darien](#) inspires people and mobilizes resources to strengthen our community. Its vision is for all community members to have the opportunity to reach their full potential as healthy, educated, and self-sufficient individuals.

TCF initiates solutions, builds collaborations, and implements and supports programs to strengthen youth, adults and families for lasting and positive impact in Darien, Norwalk and Stamford.

Since its founding in 1951, TCF has distributed over \$20 million to local nonprofit organizations and community initiatives.