



NEWTOWN-SANDY HOOK
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.

NSHCF.ORG

FINAL
REPORT

2013 -
2025

A SUMMARY OF OUR JOURNEY

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MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the twelve years following a tragedy that tore at the fabric of family and community, we have remained humbled and inspired by the resilience demonstrated by those most deeply affected. Amid the enduring challenges faced by individuals and families whose lives were forever changed, it has been the strength of our connections to one another that has sustained resolve and guided progress toward a better tomorrow. These bonds—rooted in shared experience and collective care—continue to move us forward.

Research consistently demonstrates that trauma is experienced in profoundly different ways. There is no singular or prescribed response to traumatic loss; rather, each individual's experience is shaped by personal history, lived experience, and access to meaningful support. As stewards of our endowment, we have remained committed to ensuring that the resources entrusted to us are deployed with intention and care, maximizing their impact in advancing post-trauma mental wellness and emotional resilience.

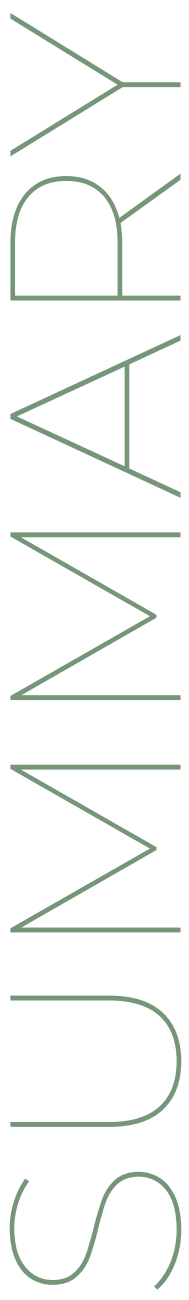
Guided by this commitment, the Foundation has focused its efforts on three core areas: providing equitable financial support for mental health and wellness services; strengthening nonprofit organizations serving those most impacted; and offering collaborative leadership to help build a stronger, more resilient community. The progress documented in this report reflects a deeply collaborative effort—anchored not only in the Foundation's leadership, but also in the dedication and partnership of service providers, donors, and community members.

As we reflect on these accomplishments, we do so with a profound sense of responsibility, gratitude, and purpose. Our work has been driven by a love for our neighbors, a commitment to community, and the enduring memory of the lives lost.

Sincerely,

Christopher McDonnell
Board Chair

Lucie Connell
Executive Director



The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc. has played a pivotal role in the aftermath of the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Established to manage funds from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund, the Foundation was guided by three important lessons learned from other communities affected by mass tragedies: **reserving funds for long-term and unforeseen needs, maintaining local control over distributions,** and **ensuring meaningful public input** throughout the process.

Over the past twelve years, the Foundation has made significant progress in promoting **mental wellness, emotional resilience, and community healing** through several key initiatives:

1. Equitable Financial Support

The Foundation has prioritized funding for mental health and wellness services, ensuring that resources are accessible to those most directly impacted by the tragedy. This equitable approach has helped meet the diverse and evolving needs of individuals and families across the community.

2. Strengthening Nonprofits

By investing in local organizations that provide direct services, the Foundation has helped to build a robust and interconnected network of care. These partnerships have expanded access to essential resources and strengthened the community's overall capacity to respond to ongoing and emerging needs.

3. Collaborative Leadership

The Foundation actively fosters collaboration among community partners, service providers, and stakeholders. This cooperative approach promotes shared responsibility, resource coordination, and the development of long-term strategies to support resilience and well-being.

The success of these initiatives reflects a deeply collaborative effort—one rooted not only in the leadership of the Foundation but also in the dedication of community organizations, donors, and residents. The spirit of togetherness and the shared commitment to a brighter future have been sustained by a profound sense of love and remembrance for those lost. Through this collective journey, the Foundation continues to **honor the memory of the lives taken** while **building a compassionate, resilient, and hopeful community** for generations to come.

RECOVERY EFFORT

The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation has been dedicated to addressing the immediate and long-term needs that arose from the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. Its mission underscores a commitment to support individuals and the broader Newtown community affected by this tragedy. Key milestones in the Foundation's efforts include:

1. **Formation of the Distribution Committees:**

- In spring 2013, the first Distribution Committee was established to allocate \$7.7 million from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund. This allocation was directed toward the 40 victims and families most severely impacted, including the families of the 26 deceased victims, the 12 surviving eyewitness children, and the two physically injured staff members.
- In November 2013, a second Distribution Committee was formed to assess the unmet needs of the community in both the short and long terms, emphasizing the importance of community input in decision-making. This committee comprised residents from Newtown/Sandy Hook, ensuring that their unique perspectives influenced the distribution decisions.

2. **Community Input:** The Distribution Committee actively sought input from various stakeholder groups and the community through:

- An annual survey distributed to those impacted, gathering formal feedback on ongoing needs.
- Ongoing outreach via one-on-one and small-group meetings with key community stakeholders.

3. **Core Funding Categories:** Based on community feedback, the Foundation organizes its funding into three main categories:

- **Mental Health & Wellness:** Providing financial support to individuals for out-of-pocket expenses related to behavioral health needs resulting from their exposure to the tragedy.
- **Grants:** Supplying grants to organizations that work directly with individuals and families affected by the tragedy, aiding their recovery process.
- **Community Strengthening:** Supporting community recovery initiatives through guest speakers, training for clinicians and nonprofit leaders, and specialized programs designed for those impacted by the events of December 14.

Through these strategic efforts, the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation remained a vital resource for healing and resilience, supporting the community as it navigated the long-term impacts of the tragedy while fostering connection and mutual support among those affected.

Planned Foundation Closure

At its inception, the Foundation did not establish a fixed sunset date for its funding initiatives. Early planning was informed by guidance from other disaster-affected communities, which emphasized the importance of retaining sufficient resources to address long-term and delayed needs, including the potential emergence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

As the Foundation's work progressed, the Board of Directors recognized the benefits of defining a clear sunset date. Establishing a timeline provided assurance to community members that the Foundation was not intended to become a permanent bureaucratic presence and that leadership and stewardship of recovery efforts would ultimately return fully to the community. Additionally, a defined timeframe was intended to promote resilience and self-sufficiency by encouraging the development of sustainable, community-based coping strategies and support systems beyond the Foundation's direct involvement.

In January 2015, the Board approved a planned transition strategy, informed in part by the anticipated graduation of the youngest class of children enrolled at Sandy Hook School on December 14, 2012. This strategy established a clear and meaningful framework for the Foundation's operations and long-term recovery efforts.

Consistent with this framework, the Foundation committed to a strategic spend-down of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund, with the goal of concluding operations by December 31, 2025. This decision reflected the Foundation's dual commitment to supporting sustained recovery while facilitating a thoughtful transition toward community self-sufficiency and long-term resilience.

DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY & IMPACT

Since its inception in early 2013, the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation has been unwavering in its commitment to supporting the victims, families, and the broader community impacted by the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. The Foundation implemented several critical strategies to facilitate recovery and resilience in the aftermath of the tragedy:

- 1. Strategic Partnership Support:** The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation acknowledged the operational costs associated with effectively managing its organization and the administration of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund. To address these challenges, the Foundation engaged strategic partners to support its operations. Through collaborative efforts and the generosity of these donor partners, the Foundation was able to ensure that no resources from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund were utilized for administrative costs. This approach not only maximized the impact of the funds designated for mental health and wellness initiatives but also allowed the Foundation to maintain transparency and integrity in its financial practices. By leveraging support from strategic partners, the Foundation has effectively focused its resources on fulfilling its mission of assisting the individuals and families affected by the tragedy while ensuring the smooth operation of its programs and initiatives. This collaboration has been instrumental in fostering community recovery and resilience in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.
- 2. Financial Support for Trauma Treatment:** The Foundation established processes to provide financial assistance for the out-of-pocket costs associated with trauma-related treatments and wellness activities. This support is essential for individuals seeking to address the mental and emotional impacts of the events.
- 3. Grant Management:** The Foundation took an active role in soliciting, reviewing, and awarding grants specifically for mental health and wellness programming. This included funding initiatives aimed at enhancing the organizational capacity of local service providers, ensuring they can effectively address the needs of those affected.
- 4. Community Leadership and Recovery Planning:** In its leadership role, the Foundation partnered with town officials and community leaders to develop a comprehensive community recovery plan. This collaborative effort included securing state grants designed to fund resources that assist the town in supporting victim families and enhancing overall community wellbeing.

Through these initiatives, the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation has not only provided essential support to those directly affected but has also fostered a collaborative approach to community recovery. By working alongside local leaders and organizations, the Foundation continued to play a vital role in building a resilient and connected community in the wake of tragedy.

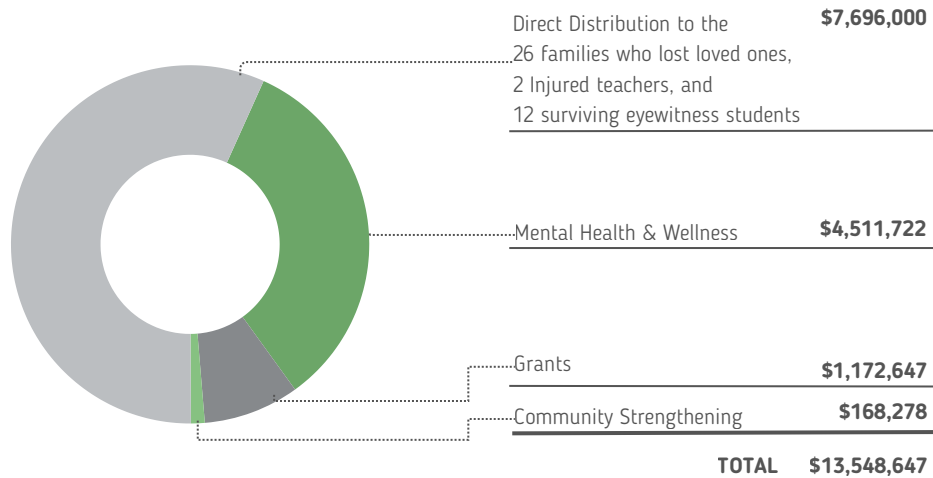
DISTRIBUTIONS, GRANTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation made significant strides in its efforts to support the victims, families, and the community affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. The Foundation's key initiatives and financial distributions included:

- 1. Direct Distribution:** The Foundation allocated \$7.7 million from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund to directly assist the 40 victims and families most severely impacted by the tragedy. This distribution included:
 - Families of the 26 deceased victims.
 - Families of the 12 surviving eyewitness children present in the classrooms during the incident.
 - The two staff members who were physically injured.
- 2. Mental Health and Wellness:** A critical component of the Foundation's mission has been to address long-term mental health needs. The Foundation provided \$4.5 million in financial assistance to individuals for out-of-pocket expenses related to behavioral health care stemming from their experiences of the tragedy.
- 3. Grants:** The Foundation has awarded 31 grants totaling \$1.17 million to 23 nonprofit organizations that align with its mission. These grants support recovery efforts for groups and individuals impacted by the events of December 14, 2012, focusing on initiatives that promote healing and resilience.
- 4. Community Strengthening:** The Foundation has also engaged in community recovery leadership, providing \$168,278 in financial support for essential programs, including:
 - Training for clinicians and nonprofit leaders.
 - Specialized programs tailored for the local community, enhancing skills and resources for those working in recovery and support roles.
 - Securing state grants.

Through these initiatives, the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering a supportive environment for healing and recovery, ensuring that both immediate and long-term needs were addressed within the community impacted by this tragedy.

SANDY HOOK SCHOOL SUPPORT FUND SPENDING



GRANT RECIPIENTS 2013-2025

- o Ben's Lighthouse
- o Connecticut Institute for Communities, Inc. School Based Health Center, Newtown Middle School
- o Embrace Hope
- o Family & Children's Aid
- o Friends of the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial
- o Heart of Hope-Newtown Chapter
- o HEART 9/11
- o Newtown Community Center- Playmakers
- o Newtown Community Center – CMAK Foundation Race4Chase
- o Newtown Kindness
- o Newtown Police Department
- o Newtown Public Schools
- o Newtown Youth Academy (NYA)
- o Newtown Youth & Family Services (NYFS)
- o Northwest Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
- o Recovery & Resiliency Team
- o Resiliency Center of Newtown (RCN)
- o The Ana Grace Project
- o The Avielle Foundation
- o The Center for Empowerment and Education
- o The Tapping Solution Foundation
- o Town of Newtown, Center for Support & Wellness
- o Wheeler Clinic

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the past twelve years, extensive experience responding to incidents of mass violence has revealed critical lessons for supporting affected individuals and communities. Effective recovery depends on collaboration, transparent communication, and the early inclusion of key stakeholders to ensure that all voices are represented. Relief efforts must balance immediate emergency response with long-term healing and sustainability, guided by clear structures, and trauma-informed leadership. Coordinated partnerships, resource sharing, and capacity building strengthen both the efficiency and compassion of community recovery. Together, these principles form the foundation for a resilient, informed, and sustainable response to a community-wide tragedy.

1. Collaboration

Coordinated efforts among multiple relief funds prevented duplication of services, ensured comprehensive support for families, and streamlined administrative processes. Building relationships across community partners and learning from other affected communities proved critical to both short- and long-term recovery.

2. Inclusion of Key Stakeholders

Identifying and engaging victims, survivors, and community leaders early in the process strengthened decision-making and ensured that diverse perspectives were represented throughout all phases of response and recovery.

3. Clear Communication

Transparent, consistent communication built trust and reduced confusion. While privacy protections can limit outreach, establishing multiple communication channels and community partnerships helped maintain clear and accessible information for all stakeholders.

4. Control and Transparency

Clearly defining the structure, purpose, and limitations of relief funds—while honoring donor intent—was essential to maintaining credibility and public trust.

5. Resource Coordination

Mapping and monitoring other relief efforts clarified roles, reduced redundancy, and revealed opportunities for collaboration to maximize collective impact.

6. Addressing Short- and Long-Term Needs

A phased approach allowed for immediate response to urgent needs (such as emergency assistance and support for first responders) while reserving resources for long-term services like mental health care and family assistance. Flexibility was key to addressing emerging needs over time.

7. Trauma Education

Decision-makers and leaders benefited from trauma-informed training, helping them better understand and respond to the complex and varied effects of trauma on individuals and communities.

8. Capacity Building and Sustainability

Effective relief efforts included clear end goals and strategies for long-term community resilience. Investing in local capacity and sustainable support structures proved vital for ongoing healing and preparedness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fulfillment of our mission has been made possible through the collaborative efforts of many within our community. We extend our sincere gratitude to:

Our Board of Directors and Distribution Committee, for their guidance and support. Their generous commitment of time and expertise ensured that our work remained aligned with our mission, and we are deeply grateful for their oversight and direction.

Our dedicated partners, whose financial and administrative support of the Foundation's operations, making the efficient administration of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund possible. We extend our sincere gratitude to the following organizations:

- *The Jeniam Foundation*
- *Pro Bono Partnership*
- *Lions Club*
- *Newtown Rotary*
- *Connecticut Office of Victim Services*
- *Fairfield County Community Foundation*

Those impacted by the tragedy, for entrusting the Foundation to provide collaborative leadership and resources in support of efforts focused on post-trauma mental wellness and emotional resiliency.



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