



NEWTOWN-SANDY HOOK
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.

2013

THE
JOURNEY
OF
HEALING

2017

5 YEAR
RETROSPECTIVE
REPORT

The mission of the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation is to devote itself to furthering and supporting operations and activities which address the short-term and long-term unmet needs of individuals and the Newtown community arising from the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.

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February 2018

Five years ago this month the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc. was founded to receive the funds collected through the Sandy Hook School Support Fund. Neither would exist if not for the unbearable tragedy that took the lives of 26 individuals and changed the lives of thousands of others on December 14, 2012. It is with deepest compassion and utmost respect for all those so impacted that we do our work.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Newtown-Sandy Hook community, and those around the country and the world who showed us an enormous outpouring of financial support, how the funds have been used and the work that we have done to date. We hope this report provides some valuable lessons learned to other communities that are both preparing for trauma response and in the recovery process along with our community.

While there have been other tragedies around the country that have been similar, what happened here in Newtown was unprecedented. We haven't been perfect. In this situation, perfect was not possible. The greatest challenge has been to accept that there have not been, nor likely will be, any decisions marked by universal agreement. Given that difficult reality, we set forth to involve a diverse group of impacted individuals, to listen and respond, and to make the best decisions possible in a timely and transparent manner. We hope we have done that to date and will strive to continue to do that moving forward.

We look forward to continuing to partner with individuals, groups, and organizations throughout the community to build a robust infrastructure of support that will last well beyond our sunset date of December 31, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer D. Barahona". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jennifer D. Barahona, LCSW
Executive Director

An extraordinary amount of time and sacrifice was provided by dozens of individuals who answered the call to assist in getting a structure in place to manage an event that could never be anticipated and a response that was unprecedented. Few people truly know how difficult the task was and we wish to thank and acknowledge their efforts here.



HISTORY & FORMATION

The following information is not intended to be a comprehensive accounting of all that took place in the early days of the Foundation but rather we aim to provide the reader an overview of the critical milestones of the initial response and formation of the fund and the organization. Each step is documented more fully in voluminous written accounts and organizational documents.

Establishment of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund

Within hours of the tragedy it became clear that donations would be pouring in from across the country and a process for streamlining these gifts needed to be quickly established. Due to the nature of their name, Newtown Savings Bank (NSB) became one of the primary places where donors began calling, looking for a place to give. With tight accounting procedures already in place and the ability to staff up quickly, NSB established an account for the unsolicited funds. With the unprecedented volume of calls and donations coming in, NSB turned to a well-known and trusted community partner, the United Way of Western Connecticut (UWWC), for guidance, support, and collaboration.



Current Board of Directors

Gavin Arneth
 Dr. Charles Herrick
 Christopher McDonnell
 Anne Ragusa
 Benjamin Spragg

Ex-Officio Directors

Isabel Almeida
 Will Rodgers

Executive Director

Jennifer Barahona

"I intended to close our office and send employees home to be with their families, when calls from Foundations and United Ways around the country began to come in offering support to our community and sharing experiences from other tragic shootings," states Kim Morgan, Chief Executive Officer of UWWC. "I learned a lot that afternoon about the complexity of setting up funds that would support victims and the community. Over the next several hours, we also received calls from donors and corporate partners who wanted to donate."

"Newtown Savings Bank called to ask if we would consider opening a fund. We agreed, with the understanding that United Way would only facilitate the processing of the gifts, not determine how the funds would be spent or hold the funds long-term. The decision-making would belong to the victims and the community, and we would not accept any formal designated gifts."

Although formally designated gifts were not accepted, the bulk of donations had informal expressions of donor intent noted in the Memo section of checks or accompanying cover letters, often expressing concern for families or the more general community, including school staff and emergency responders. Donors who requested funds be used for a specific purpose were referred to a variety of other funds to fit their request.

By the end of the day on December 14th, the Sandy Hook School Support Fund (SHSSF) was established by NSB and UWWC.

With input from a number of other communities that experienced mass shootings, both entities recognized the importance of proceeding carefully and thoughtfully with distribution of the funds and felt that those decisions should come from the community itself. They therefore moved quickly to form a transition team comprised of community stakeholders that would ultimately found the Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc. (NSHCF) in February 2013. They first sought the assistance of two local attorneys and together they selected a transition team composed of themselves and leaders from the local government, medical and business sectors. Its first meeting was held within days following the tragedy and its sole purpose was to form a foundation that could receive the funds from UWWC. The NSHCF received the entirety of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund. Neither NSB nor UWWC received any compensation from the Fund.

During the days, weeks, and months that followed, NSB and UWWC continued to sort through tens of thousands of pieces of mail and respond to thousands of phone calls. Donations were forwarded to the appropriate fund, if not intended for the SHSSF, and every piece of mail was cataloged and retained.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS FUND

It is important to note that simultaneously, UWWC rapidly moved to mobilize support for an Immediate Needs Fund that they operated to pay for living expenses for those most profoundly affected by the tragedy without delay. This is significant, and a lesson for future communities, as it provided the time necessary for the thoughtful and thorough formation of the NSHCF to make plans for the donations through the SHSSF while providing much needed support to those in crisis. Other community partners joined in the Immediate Needs Fund, including the Rotary Club of Newtown and the Newtown Memorial Fund. Together, these groups provided over \$625,000 in mental health, financial hardship, and daily living expenses for 150 families whose lives were significantly disrupted by the tragedy. This included family members who lost loved ones, school staff, and first responders whose trauma prevented them from returning to work immediately. On September 30, 2013 this fund transitioned from an emphasis on covering living expenses to one that focused on paying for mental health related needs. The Immediate Needs Fund continued until June 2014 when the Foundation began oversight of the re-named Collaborative Recovery Fund which still operates today.

Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc. and Foundation Leadership

The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc. was incorporated on February 27, 2013 by incorporators: **William F. L. Rodgers, Andrew J. Buzzi, Jr., Kimberly Morgan, Elizabeth Goehring, Andrew M. Zeitlin, John F. Trentacosta, Tanya W. Truax, David L. Grogins, Floyd J. Dugas,** and **Debbie Leidlein**. In addition to this transition team, the Honorable **Joseph I. Lieberman** was named as a special advisor.

The incorporators identified the need for expertise in the areas of business, law, faith, mental health, and finances as imperative at the board level and appointed the following Newtown residents as the first board of directors for the Foundation: **Joseph DiCandido**, former President of Nutek Aerospace Corp., **Dr. Charles Herrick**, Danbury Hospital's Chair of Psychiatry, **Attorney Anne M. Ragusa**, Newtown Attorney, **Benjamin B. Spragg**, former Newtown Finance Director, and **Monsignor Robert Weiss**, Pastor of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Newtown. Incorporated into the by-laws were also three permanent, non-voting *ex-officio* director positions for NSB, UWWC, and the Town of Newtown. These entities have a right, but not an obligation, to appoint a representative. Original *ex-officio* directors included **Kimberly Morgan, William F. L. Rodgers,** and **John F. Trentacosta**. After serving one, 2-year term, Joseph DiCandido and Msgr. Weiss stepped down in February 2015 and **Gavin Arneith** and **Christopher McDonnell** were voted onto the board. At that same time UWWC appointed **Isabel Almeida** to replace Kimberly Morgan as an *ex-officio* director. In January 2016, John F. Trentacosta stepped down from his *ex-officio* role.

The Foundation was led and managed by volunteer board members until the summer of 2013 when they began a search for an executive director to oversee the continued management of the Foundation and subsequent distributions. They recognized that in order for the Foundation to undertake fiscal due diligence, engage impacted populations to understand emerging needs, manage the responsibilities of the 501(c)(3) and more, they needed a qualified director. **Jennifer D. Barahona**, a licensed clinical social worker with non-profit management experience as well as experience in mass tragedies from her work after September 11, 2001, was hired in September of that year.



“Based on the information provided and reviewed by my Office to date, it appears that the actions and decisions of the Fiduciaries have been reasonable and compliant both with donor intent as well as the Foundation’s governing documents.”

George Jepsen
Connecticut Attorney General

DISTRIBUTIONS FROM THE SANDY HOOK SCHOOL SUPPORT FUND

First Distribution Committee

The Foundation was established with bylaws that outlined a structure whereby decisions regarding distribution of funds from the SHSSF reside with Distribution Committees and not the Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for determining the allocation of funds to committees. The SHSSF was established as an unrestricted fund that would support those impacted by the tragedy, including families who lost a loved one, families of children in the school, school staff, emergency responders and others impacted in the community. The board took into consideration the extensive research and conversations had with representatives of multiple communities who had been through mass tragedies. The conclusion from those discussions was that the Newtown community should expect to face direct consequences of the shooting for 15+ years, and the advice given many times was to hold onto resources to address needs that are not apparent in the first year. With this long view of recovery needs firmly in mind, the board set out to determine the scope and process for distributions to those most impacted.

In the spring of 2013, the first Distribution Committee was formed to determine how best to allocate \$7.7 million from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund to the 40 victims and families most severely impacted by the tragedy. This included the families of the 26 deceased victims, the families of the 12 surviving eyewitness children present in the classrooms directly involved in the shootings, and the two physically injured staff members. The total amount was set by the Board based on many discussions with victim families, research into short- and long-term needs of impacted populations of similar crimes, and donor-intent. The amount allocated for this distribution was corroborated by the findings of Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen and can be found in his correspondences with the Foundation dated May 30th and August 7th of 2013 and accessible on our website www.nshcf.org.

Members of the Distribution Committee were: **Judge Alan Nevas** (*chair*), **Dr. John Woodall**, and **Joe Smialowski**. At the request of some of the families, **Kenneth Feinberg**, a victim compensation expert with a national reputation, advised the committee and

assisted in the actual claims/distribution process. This distribution was originally scheduled to be completed in May 2013, but was temporarily paused while meetings were held at the request of Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy and Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen to determine the basis for the allocation amount. It resumed on July 11 & 12 with private and public forums. Distributions were made in August 2013. Ninety-five percent of the allocation was distributed to families of victims with each receiving \$281,000. The physically injured staff each received \$75,000, and the families of surviving eyewitness students each received \$20,000.

Second Distribution Committee

In November 2013, a second Distribution Committee of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund was created to begin the work of looking at the unmet needs of the community and those most impacted by the tragedy in both the short and long term. Input from the most impacted populations was, and continues to be, paramount to all distribution decisions and by design, the committee was comprised of individuals who are Newtown/Sandy Hook residents and bring perspectives that are unique to how they were impacted by the tragedy. The diverse group allows for continuous input from those populations at the epicenter of the tragedy.

Original members of the second Distribution Committee included the following Newtown residents:

- Gavin Arneth** (*Financial Advisor & Newtown parent*)
- Dr. Robert Bazuro** (*ER Physician and Sandy Hook/Newtown parent*)
- Jennifer Clark** (*Sandy Hook/Newtown public school bus driver*)
- Kevin Cragin** (*Board of Fire Commissioners*)
- Christopher McDonnell** (*Father of Grace McDonnell who died tragically at Sandy Hook School*)
- Reverend Robert Morris** (*Pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church & Newtown parent*)
- Sgt. Scott Ruszczyk** (*Newtown Police Department*)
- Addie Sandler** (*MSW & Newtown parent*)
- Bob Schmidt** (*LPC & proxy for the surviving eyewitness children & their families*)
- Connie Sullivan** (*Surviving Sandy Hook School teacher*)
- Joeline Wruck** (*Foundation Grants Specialist & Newtown parent*)

Gavin Arneth and **Christopher McDonnell** moved onto the Board of Directors in 2015. **Cindy Mattioli** (*mother of James Mattioli who died tragically at Sandy Hook School*) served one 2-year term to replace Mr. McDonnell. Four original members remain on the committee; **Rob Bazuro**, **Kevin Cragin**, **Rob Morris**, and **Bob Schmidt**.

They are joined by:

- Anka Roberto** (*DNP, APRN and Sandy Hook parent*)
- Curtis Urbina** (*Sandy Hook/Newtown parent*)
- Chief James Viadero** (*Chief, Newtown Police Department*)
- Janet Vollmer** (*Surviving Sandy Hook School teacher*)
- Cheyenne Wirtz** (*Mother of Allison Wyatt who died tragically at Sandy Hook School*)

The Distribution Committee is charged with soliciting input from stakeholder groups and the community at large as part of their assessment of ongoing needs. The most formal arena for input comes by way of an annual survey distributed by the Foundation to the community and all populations impacted. Additional outreach occurs in ongoing, one-on-one and small-group meetings with key stakeholders throughout the community.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

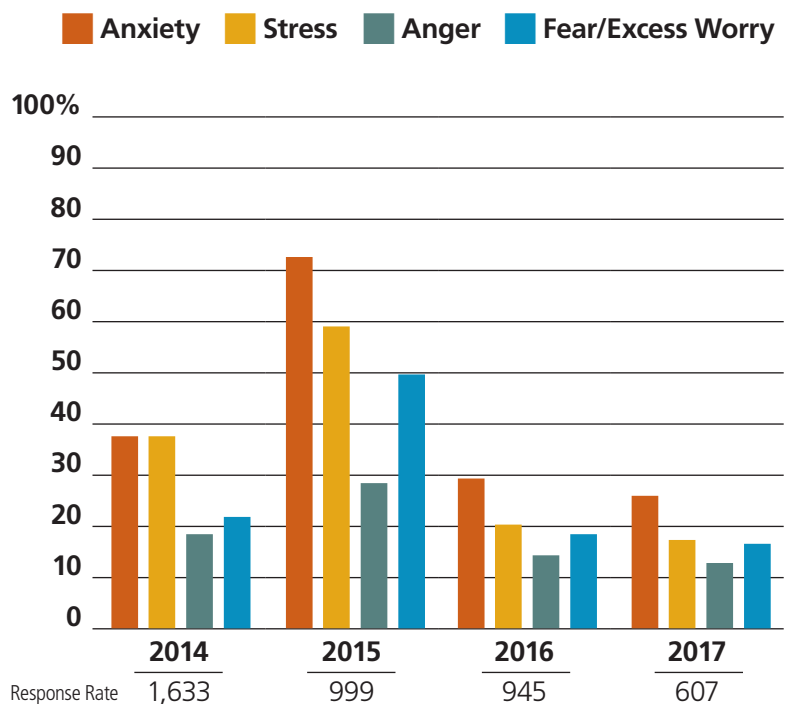
Beginning in the spring of 2014, the Foundation began surveying the community to help inform the Distribution Committee on how people were coping, what was helping, where funding should be prioritized, and more. Individual results of all four community needs assessments done to date can be found on the Foundation’s website (www.nshcf.org).

An analysis of four years of survey data revealed that anxiety, stress, anger, and excessive fear/worry were the symptoms most frequently identified. The results showed a significant spike in these four domains in 2015. Some attributed this increase to the ‘Novocain’ having worn off and a new reality emerging. In our research of other communities impacted by an incident of mass violence, we have been discouraged by the lack of data, particularly longitudinal, to help inform the needs of individuals impacted by such events. We believe this increase in symptomatology beginning two years post tragedy should be a lesson learned for other communities.

“Art therapy gave us a way to express fears and concern without needing to use words. It took the power away from bad dreams as we redrew them and took control of the outcome. It helped my daughter without her realizing she was in therapy.”

Sandy Hook School parent

Percentage of respondents reporting feeling the following “to a great extent”



Participants consistently identified the need for individual and family counseling and financial support of out-of-pocket mental health costs for those impacted as funding priorities each year. Self-reported data on the efficacy of various treatments showed a very broad range in what helped individuals in their recovery. Of important note is the incredibly vast number of trauma treatments and services available in the community. Still, it has often taken individuals multiple attempts with different providers and types of treatments to find the most helpful and effective strategy.

Several of the following themes emerged from respondents over the years with frequency:

- Confusion about the various groups, funds, and eligibility for services. Adding to this confusion is the fact that so many groups have very similar names.
- Concern about those who have yet to receive any professional support or assistance and who do not necessarily recognize their own trauma, anger, and anxiety and how it impacts their children, family members, and the rest of the community.
- Stigma related barriers with Police, Fire, and Ambulance Corps members who may be reluctant to receive mental health assistance or don't want to have anything on record that indicates they have sought treatment.
- Worry that fracturing has occurred among some individuals and groups. Central to this theme was the idea that a 'hierarchy of impact' has led to a competition for grief and resources. This has created, as the data in the surveys confirmed, a great deal of survivor guilt and suffering in silence by individuals who don't feel as if they should be struggling or have a right to reach out for help because they weren't as directly impacted as someone else.

The results of the surveys also allow us to provide real-time feedback to our community partners so that they may be responsive to the needs as well. For example, after the 2017 survey indicated a need for information and workshops on how to speak to children who were too young or not living in community on 12/14/12 about the tragedy, the Resiliency Center of Newtown responded by adding free workshops, open to the public, on this topic.

Development of 'spending buckets'

Through feedback received on pressing needs and priorities, funding has been broken down into three core categories over the last several years. Each of these are outlined in depth in the following pages.

Mental Health & Wellness The fund continues to provide financial support to qualified individuals for out-of-pocket costs related to behavioral health needs from issues stemming from their exposure to the tragedy.

Grants The fund provides grants to organizations working directly with those impacted by the tragedy.

Community Strengthening The fund promotes continued recovery through support of community guest speakers, trainings for clinicians and non-profit leaders, specialized programs for impacted populations, and more.

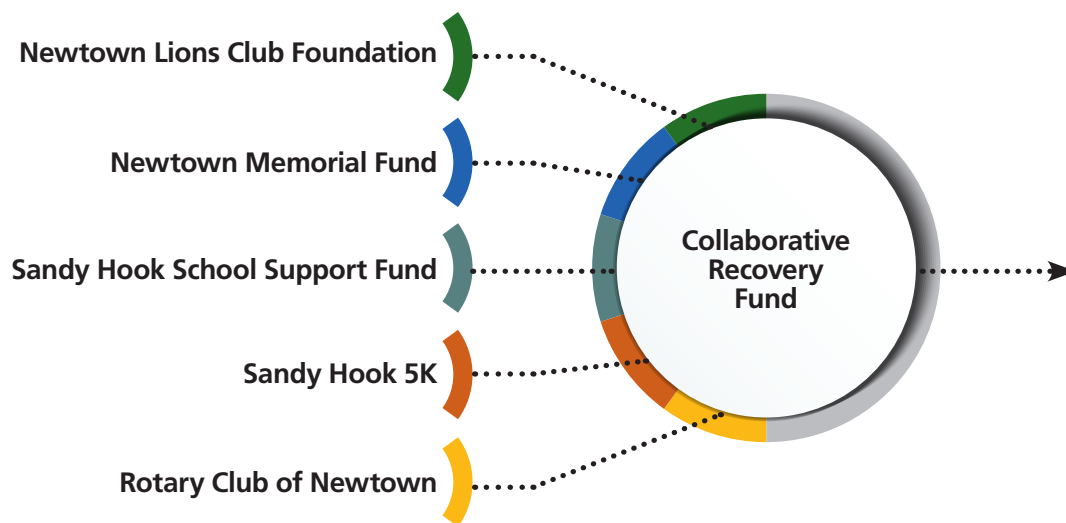


“EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) saved my life,” reported an emergency responder who had previously tried other forms of treatment without finding relief. “I was drinking several bottles of alcohol a week to numb the pain before finding something that worked for me. It was incredibly effective for me to stop the intrusive thoughts that were impacting me on a frequent basis throughout the day.”

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

A November 2017 U.S. NEWS article, *When The Scars Of A Mass Shooting Aren't Left By Bullets*, highlighted a trend across so many of the mass shootings that have taken place both before and after 12/14/12. Almost uniformly in these cases, funds were distributed quickly and those with psychological injuries were left nearly completely out of the equation. With that concern in mind and the advice of other disaster communities, the board of the Foundation held funds to assist with those anticipated future needs. As a result, the Sandy Hook School Support Fund has helped hundreds of victim family members, students, school staff, emergency responders, and others suffering post-traumatic stress disorder or other psychiatric issues stemming from exposure to the trauma on December 14, 2012.

Since June 2014, the Foundation has overseen the process of providing financial support for the out-of-pocket cost for trauma-related treatment and wellness activities. It has done so in partnership with other organizations in town that also received donated funds for the purposes of mental health support. The Foundation helped form and organize a Collaborative Recovery Fund that streamlined support for mental health services by consolidating funds from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund, the Rotary Club of Newtown (Rotary), the Newtown Lions Club Foundation (Lions), the Newtown Memorial Fund, and the Sandy Hook 5K (via the Newtown Memorial Fund). A \$247,813 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to the Town of Newtown was also used in 2015 to help offset these costs.



The funds are the final payer after health insurance has been utilized. All out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays and deductibles are eligible for payment through the fund. Through this collaboration the individual funds have been leveraged to maximize efficiencies and streamline the process for individuals seeking support.

Funding has been used to support both traditional treatments (therapy and related costs such as medications) as well as wellness related services such as yoga and social/emotional wellness activities for children. In the landmark trauma book, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Dr. Bessel A. van der Kolk underscores the importance of the reestablishment of trust and safety as paramount to trauma recovery. "Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives," states van der Kolk¹.

Re-engaging traumatized children into social and emotional programming to build up their executive functions has been a key component for many still recovering. As van der Kolk states, "...many of the methods that profess to treat trauma, tend to bypass this emotional-engagement system and focus instead on recruiting the cognitive capacities of the mind. Despite the well-documented effects of anger, fear, and anxiety on the ability to reason, many programs continue to ignore the need to engage the safety system of the brain before trying to promote new ways of thinking. The last things that should be cut from school schedules are chorus, physical education, recess, and anything else involving movement, play, and joyful engagement." With the lessons from van der Kolk and other experts in the field of trauma in mind, the committee subsequently expanded the scope of funding to include such wellness activities.

¹ van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking, 2014.



“I cannot thank you enough for all your support and understanding over the last two years. Without your compassion and dedication we wouldn’t have the resources to provide care for our daughter and all of whom survived the senseless tragedy that changed our world.”

Sandy Hook School parent

Mental Health & Wellness Funding to date (October 2013-December 2017)

| | Funding Partners | Sandy Hook School Support Fund | Total Mental Health Dollars |
|---------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2013 | 162,468 | — | 162,468 |
| 2014 | 482,630 | 209,499 | 692,129 |
| 2015 | 314,040 | 250,066 | 564,106 |
| 2016 | 44,586 | 400,120 | 444,706 |
| 2017 | 92,072 | 292,549 | 384,621 |
| TOTALS | 1,095,796 | 1,152,234 | 2,248,030 |

The Collaborative Recovery Fund has supported 640 individuals since June 2014.

The charts on the following page represents **NEW** and **TOTAL** numbers of individuals served each year. Of note is the drop in 2016 of students from other Newtown schools and “others impacted.” “Others impacted” were sometimes staff in other buildings in the district that had close ties to Sandy Hook School, friends and neighbors of victims, and individuals who played a role in the response and recovery that are not readily apparent. Beginning in January 2016, the Collaborative Recovery Fund partners made a difficult decision to change eligibility criteria for support and implemented caps on the amount of reimbursement for some categories of individuals. This was due to the steady demand on the system in 2015 and wanting to assure funding would be available for the next several years. A safeguard was put in place via a review committee so that individuals with documented 12/14 related needs would not go unassisted. As we were warned in the early days by other communities, individuals have come forward seeking assistance for the first time steadily each year.

Number of NEW individuals each year receiving support for the first time

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Total |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Family Members of Victims | 50 | 16 | 11 | 4 | 81 |
| Injured/Eyewitnesses and their Family Members | 39 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 55 |
| SHS Students and their Family Members | 140 | 57 | 33 | 35 | 260 |
| SHS Staff and their Family Members | 25 | 15 | 12 | 20 | 66 |
| Emergency Responders and their Family Members | 13 | 14 | 4 | 5 | 35 |
| Newtown Students (not at SHS on 12/14) | 30 | 33 | 2 | 0 | 65 |
| Others (predominantly parents and staff in other Newtown schools or connected to victims) | 27 | 38 | 1 | 0 | 65 |
| TOTALS | 324 | 178 | 68 | 68 | 640 |

TOTAL number of individuals served each year

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Family Members of Victims | 50 | 61 | 66 | 64 |
| Injured/Eyewitnesses and their Family Members | 39 | 40 | 46 | 39 |
| SHS Students and their Family Members | 140 | 150 | 125 | 126 |
| SHS Staff and their Family Members | 25 | 35 | 40 | 48 |
| Emergency Responders and their Family Members | 13 | 24 | 18 | 18 |
| Newtown Students (not at SHS on 12/14) | 30 | 51 | 21 | 1 |
| Others (predominantly parents and staff in other Newtown schools or connected to victims) | 27 | 55 | 16 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 324 | 416 | 332 | 296 |



To date we have awarded \$761,352 in grants and have supported the following organizations and initiatives:

- Ben's Lighthouse
- Connecticut Institute for Communities, Inc., School-Based Health Center, Newtown Middle School
- Embrace Hope
- Family & Children's Aid
- Heart 9/11
- Lunding/Bannerstone Consulting
- Newtown Kindness
- Newtown Public Schools
- Newtown Youth Academy
- Newtown Youth & Family Services
- Northwest AHEC
- Recovery & Resiliency Team
- Resiliency Center of Newtown
- The Ana Grace Project
- The Avielle Foundation
- The Tapping Solution Foundation
- Town of Newtown, Center for Support & Wellness
- Wheeler Clinic

GRANTS

Per our mission, the Foundation provides funding for non-profit organizations that are working to support recovery efforts with groups and individuals impacted by the tragedy at Sandy Hook School on 12/14/12. Requests for proposals are solicited two times per year, in March and September. Grants are provided for programming as well as organizational capacity building. We choose to invest in the infrastructure of organizations that deliver valuable services to the community. The Foundation is therefore eager to partner with organizations that:

- Focus and emphasize direct service to those most impacted starting with the families of victims, surviving SHS students and staff, emergency responders, and others suffering traumatic effects from 12/14/12
- Recognize the importance of connecting individuals and groups to cohesive relationships and who have a record of doing so in the Newtown community
- Actively collaborate with other community organizations to complement services and create a network of support
- Offer programs and services that are supported by research and best practices in the field of trauma and disaster recovery
- Make data-informed decisions in programming and planning
- Demonstrate solid sustainability plans

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

Youth Mental Health First Aid Through an initiative led by the Wheeler Clinic, Inc., the Foundation provided funding in 2014 to train every teacher in the Newtown Public Schools in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA). YMHFA is an 8-hour public education program which introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and teaches individuals how to help an adolescent in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge. In 2015, the Newtown Public Schools added the training as a requirement for all new staff to the district during their orientation.



HEART 9/11 (Healing Emergency Aid Response Team 9/11) is a team of first responders - FDNY, NYPD, PAPD and the NYC Building Trades - that bonded in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 to honor the sacrifices of brave colleagues and family members lost, to continue to utilize their experience and training in service to others and to bring a message of hope to communities affected by disaster. HEART 9/11's mission is to Respond immediately to natural and man-made disasters; Rebuild community centers in hard-hit areas to meet grass roots needs; Recover by building resiliency for individuals, families and communities.

Recognizing the challenges of providing assistance specifically to police officers, HEART 9/11's response to Newtown was to embed teams within the Newtown Police Department for sixteen hours a day, five days a week for a year. Teams visited with individual officers and in small groups, went on ride-alongs, and hosted all-day retreats for officers and their significant others. The teams knew from previous experiences that the commitment of time and the ability and willingness to share experiences would ultimately be successful.

The Newtown PD has since participated in HEART 9/11 veteran builds for severely injured returning soldiers, demonstrating their empathy and a sense of altruism which many experts define as a pathway to recovery and resiliency. The Newtown PD is now also very involved with CT Police Departments peer-to-peer groups. As a result of HEART 9/11's work in Newtown, they are developing a first responder wellness program with the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI) for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. The goal of this collaboration is to adapt the BHI's evidenced-based Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART) Program for use with first responders. The program will be delivered in a familiar language by peers who are credible and knowledgeable. Beta testing has been done with nine Newtown Police members to date who will ultimately train other responders. HEART 9/11 will begin training sessions in early 2018 for six additional local Connecticut police departments who provided mutual aid to Newtown during the tragedy.



Resiliency Center of Newtown The Resiliency Center of Newtown (RCN) offers trauma informed services focused on long-term individual and community healing for children and adults impacted by the tragedy at Sandy Hook School on December 14, 2012.

The Foundation has supported RCN with funds for programming and services as well as capacity building. Since opening their doors in September 2013, RCN has helped more than 800 individuals and provided more than 1,500 individual sessions, providing critically needed services that are not otherwise available. This includes drop-in support and crisis counseling, expressive therapies (art, music, play), support groups, summer camps, brain and body based trauma therapies (Brainspotting, MNRI – Masgutova Neurosensorimotor Reflex Integration, EFT/Tapping, aromatherapy, yoga), life-skills workshops, youth development programs, mental health first aid trainings, educational workshops, and relationship building activities.



“My child has a hard time verbalizing his feeling. Nothing was working until we started him in Equine Assisted Therapy. Once he was placed with horses and movement he amazingly expressed his feelings.”

Sandy Hook School parent

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

What works in trauma healing?

As the results of our annual assessment show, there is no singular therapy or intervention that is most helpful. Trauma response and recovery is as unique as a thumbprint and in most cases, individual therapeutic interventions are not enough to overcome the scope and magnitude of a trauma as profound as the one that took place on 12/14/12. Research on resilience and recovery from trauma emphasizes the need for strong, supportive relationships that connect people to one another. “The most traumatic aspects of all disasters involve the shattering of human connections. And this is especially true for children...Because humans are inescapably social beings, the worst catastrophes that can befall us inevitably

involve relational loss. As a result, recovery from trauma and neglect is also all about relationships—rebuilding trust, regaining confidence, returning to a sense of security and reconnecting to love. Of course, medications can help relieve symptoms and talking to a therapist can be incredibly useful. But healing and recovery are impossible—even with the best medications and therapy in the world — without lasting, caring connections to others.” (Perry and Szalavitz 2008)²

With the recognition that improved functioning and healing requires strong, supportive social networks; the Foundation has sponsored events, activities, and workshops that have brought people together. In 2014 the Foundation was instrumental in the formation of Community Connections, a collaborative group of individuals and organizations working on joint programming in an effort to avoid duplication and to create a relationally enriched environment on a community wide level.

Some highlights of the work around Community Strengthening have included:

Community Connections - A Day of Shared Experiences, May 31, 2014 – Held at Walnut Hill Community Church, the event brought 250 members of the community together with speakers from other communities impacted by mass violence – Columbine, Virginia Tech, Chardon, Ohio and the Nickle Mines Amish Community – for a day of connecting, sharing, and learning.

Community Connections - Symposium on Treatment Options & Resources for Children and Adults, June 11, 2015. Inspired by requests for clarification on treatments options, a symposium was held so that community members and treatment providers could learn more about the about the resources available in the community. An accompanying booklet was produced with information on understanding trauma and the various treatment modalities.

continued on next page



Community Connections - May 31, 2014

² Perry, Bruce Duncan, and Maia Szalavitz. *The Boy Who Was Raised As a Dog: And Other Stories From a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook : What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Life, Loss, Love, and Healing*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.

Community & Clinical Trainings - The need for continuous education around trauma and grief has been apparent at both the community level as well as in the area of professional development for the clinical community serving the needs of those impacted. As such, the Foundation has played a role in both financing and helping organize several events over the years, including:

- **Dr. Ken Druck** – A series of workshops delivered in 2014 and 2015 on Healing Your Life After the Loss of a Child for families who lost loved ones at Sandy Hook School.
- **Laura Van Der Noot Lipsky** – As an expert in trauma stewardship, Laura worked with the community as well as staff at Sandy Hook School in 2015.
- **Dr. Bruce Perry** – A community breakfast in December 2015 featuring a keynote address from world renowned speaker, Dr. Bruce Perry, on how deepening connections and relationships transform families & communities.
- **Center for Complicated Grief Treatment at Columbia University** – 50 clinicians and community leaders received the level 1 training in November 2016 with 22 of those continuing on for the full training in the Complicated Grief Treatment Model in April 2017.
- **Playmakers** – The Life is Good Kids Foundation (LIGKF) partners with leading childcare organizations to positively impact the quality of care delivered to the most vulnerable children. LIGKF delivers vital personal and professional resources and a community support network to help professionals tap into the power of optimism to build healing, life-changing relationships with children in their care. In collaboration with over a dozen local organizations, the Foundation has lead the effort to get a cohort of community Playmaker Champions fully trained and is actively working with the Newtown Public Schools to add Playmakers to the school community.

Nonprofit Capacity Building Initiative - The Foundation has engaged community leaders in the social service sector to move toward a common agenda of creating and sustaining a structure that addresses the health and wellness of Newtown residents. This initiative involves organizing and facilitating a leadership group as well as providing seminars, by content area experts, in elements of effective non-profit practices. These two efforts complement our grantmaking by strengthening organizations and the systems in which they operate. The goal is that by the time the Foundation “sunset” (ceases to operate), the groups will have established a self-sustaining, collaborative, effective and efficient structure that will maintain a healthy Newtown community. The Foundation believes that investing in the *Capacity Building Initiative* will help all groups better serve the Newtown community and create an infrastructure for long-term support for those impacted by 12/14/12.

Other areas of support - The fund has been able to provide support for smaller, one-time requests that have presented themselves over the years that are specific to the needs of those groups most impacted by the tragedy. This has included things such as psycho-educational programs, support for trauma response training for school resource officers, wellness programs for Sandy Hook School staff, and support of a resource and information portal for families of loved ones killed. The Foundation also has the ability to absorb smaller funds and/or provide administrative assistance to such funds. In 2018, the Sandy Hook 5K will become the first fund to formally take advantage of this fiscal sponsorship opportunity.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

In addition to managing the Sandy Hook School Support Fund, the Foundation has taken a leadership role in the community-wide response and recovery, working closely with Town and community leaders.

- The Foundation took the lead in continuing the coordination of the Newtown Charities Coordinating Committee initiated by GE representatives working with the Town in the early months after the tragedy. The Charities Coordinating Committee brought together groups and organizations that had collected Sandy Hook related funds in an effort to share information, avoid duplication, identify unmet needs, and collaborate where it made sense to do so. The Collaborative Recovery Fund was one example of a partnership born out of the Newtown Charities Coordinating Committee.
- After receiving continuous feedback in the first year about confusion over available resources, the Foundation worked in partnership with the Town of Newtown to assist in the development of a community recovery plan that included the creation of a Recovery & Resiliency Team that was in place for 21 months from July 2014 through March 2016 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. Upon expiration of the grant, the Foundation wrote and secured a \$1.5M federal Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA) grant to assist the Town in supporting the needs of victim families and survivors by adding two care navigation positions to the newly-created Newtown Center for Support & Wellness. The grant also provided funds for services at the Resiliency Center of Newtown and Embrace Hope, an equine-assisted therapy program in Sandy Hook.

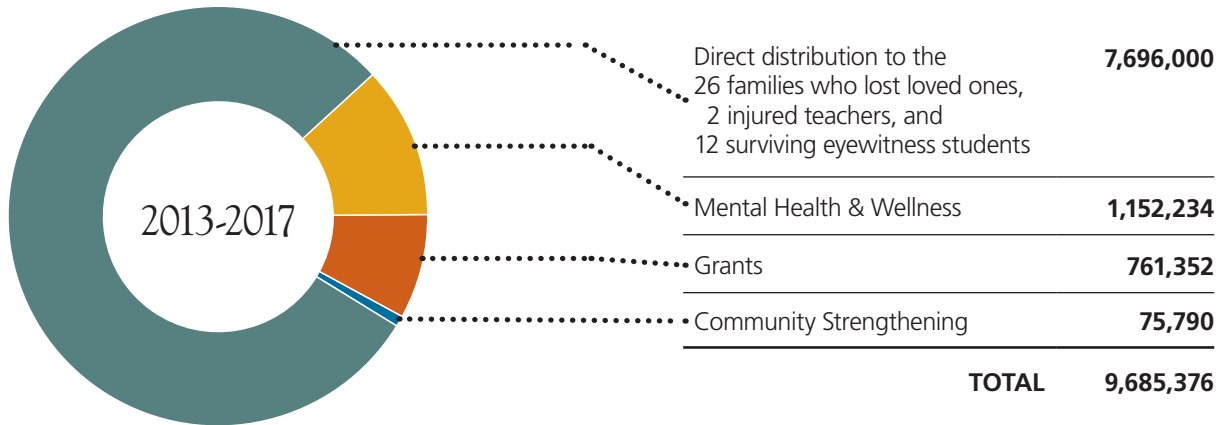


Keynote speaker Dr. Kevin Becker (2nd from left) and guests from Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Chardon, OH at the May 31, 2014 Community Connections event.

“The connection with staff from Columbine and other schools that have experienced traumas similar to ours is the main reason that I feel I’m doing as well as I am in my recovery.”

Sandy Hook School teacher

SANDY HOOK SCHOOL SUPPORT FUND SPENDING



*As of December 31, 2017, the Sandy Hook School Support Fund had a balance of \$2.77M. Funding continues to be allocated annually by a set algorithm that will zero out the fund by December 31, 2025.

The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation operates a budget separate from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund. As of 12/31/17 the Foundation had a balance of \$370,000. To date no funds have ever been taken from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund for operational overhead. For detailed audited financials, please visit our website at www.nshcf.org.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

While there are countless lessons that have been learned in the past five years, we share a few of the key takeaways here in order to help deepen the understanding of the enormous complexities facing individuals and communities impacted by mass violence.

Build Relationships Leverage the wealth of knowledge and experience from other communities who have undergone similar tragedies. These relationships will be relied upon in the short-term and long-term. Relationship building among community partners is equally important and should be a priority for all communities before a tragedy.

Identification & Inclusion of Key Stakeholders Identify key stakeholders including victims and community leaders as quickly as possible and include them in decision making. The voice of all groups impacted must be considered on an on-going basis.

Clear Communication Establish a clear vehicle of communication with key stakeholders. Communicate early and often, clarifying every step of the process for all interested parties.

Transparency Be clear on how the fund is structured and what the fund will do. Honor donor intent.

Know the Landscape Identify all other efforts that arise, who is leading them, what their intentions are, and how they relate to your efforts. Look for opportunities to collaborate, where appropriate.

Long Term Needs The ripple impact will be far reaching and needs will continue to emerge for many years after the tragedy. For these reasons we recommend reserving some resources in order to help meet those needs.

Record-keeping Maintain clear and accurate records of all communications and transactions. Crises can cause chaos. Organized record-keeping is essential.

Trauma Education Make sure that leaders and others in decision making power are trauma informed and fully understand how trauma can impact various populations.

Capacity Building and Sustainability Planning Relief efforts should have a clear end goal and a pathway to achievement. Helping build a long-term structure of community support is critical to addressing future needs.

SUNSET PLAN

Initially the Foundation did not have a fixed “sunset” date; indeed concerns voiced by other disaster communities to reserve funds to address late arising issues such as PTSD influenced early actions. However, the board came to recognize that for both reasons of assuring the affected communities that there would be no permanent “bureaucracy” created, and to provide a date by which the community would strive to be able to cope with issues without the assistance of the Foundation, there was value to the recovery process in establishing a sunset date. Accordingly, in January 2015 the Board of Directors voted on a sunset plan that was based in part on the high school graduation of the youngest class of children enrolled at Sandy Hook School on 12/14/12. The Foundation will continue to spend down the resources of the Sandy Hook School Support Fund and close on or by December 31, 2025.

The Foundation recognizes that recovery and grief will be a life-long process for many and is committed to continuing to provide support to individuals and the community with the goal of creating sustainable programs and services to assist those most impacted by the tragedy.

Our vision is to continue to help Newtown become a strong community where people connect and support one another in their journey toward healing.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND FUTURE STEPS

We believe for continued recovery to occur the community needs to remain committed to building strong connections at every level. Resilience is created through secure and stable environments at home and in the community. In order for this to happen, there must be on-going opportunities for connection and engagement, efficient coordination of resources at the systems level, collection and interpretation of data to inform and support decision making, empathic communication that is clear and consistent, and acceptance of the different ways in which people continue to recover without judgement.

In the remaining eight years of the Foundation, the Board of Directors and Distribution Committee will continue to monitor, assess, and meet the needs of those impacted by the tragedy as they continue to evolve. A gradual decrease in allocations annually from the Sandy Hook School Support Fund will continue to fulfill the greatest needs that exist at the time while working to build capacity in the Newtown community to be responsive to longer term issues that outlive the Foundation.



NEWTOWN-SANDY HOOK
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.

Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation, Inc.
2 Washington Square
Newtown, CT 06470
203-460-0687
www.nshcf.org