

# LET'S TALK UNITED

18th Annual  
Community Builders' Reception  
A Virtual Presentation  
September 22, 2020 5:30 pm





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September 2020

Dear Friends,

Thank you for tuning into the United Way of West Central Connecticut's 18th Annual Community Builders' Reception production - "Let's Talk United".

The unexpected coronavirus pandemic has provided many challenges. When we were planning to gather last April at the Double Tree by Hilton, the theme "Vision 2020" seemed timely and appropriate. We planned to kick off the evening in celebratory fashion with hugs, handshakes and picture taking on the red carpet. We planned to launch our new website and mission statement. We planned to give the audience some insight to what the next decade holds for the United Way, including celebrating our 100th anniversary in 2022.

Instead, we have adapted to a world of virtual communications to keep our volunteers, staff and community safe.

However, we did not want to let our leaders in the community go unrecognized. The Board of Directors and Community Builders' Reception committee felt it very important to share the stories of these award winning organizations and outstanding individuals who have made an impact on the lives of our residents in Bristol, Burlington, Plainville and Plymouth/Terryville.

This videotaped talk show will give you some insight to their extraordinary volunteerism, passion and spirit of caring that truly shows how each winner LIVES UNITED!

The United Way is proud to honor the individuals and organizations who have worked together with us to improve several social issues within our community. We offer our congratulations to this year's award winners: Change Maker Award – The Agape House; Collaborative Excellence Award – Bristol Sports Hall of Fame; Rising Star Award – Keys for Kindness; Spirit of Caring – Sheila Kelley, posthumous, Webster Bank; and Youth Live United Awardees: Rachel Griffin from Bristol; Nathan Misluk from Burlington; Greyson Bora from Plainville and Jenna Wildman from Plymouth.

With our focus on health, education and financial stability, we are uniquely positioned to help address some of the challenges brought on by COVID-19. We are in this together, and it is the strength of our community partners that drive real change. Together we will respond, we will recover, we will reimagine, and together we will rebuild for the long term.

We offer our special thanks to the planning committee and all who advertised in our program book, donated goods or services or contributed in countless ways to the success of this evening.

Your time and generosity are greatly appreciated.

And finally, a special thank you to MazzMedia for filming, editing and producing such a magnificent show for us.

Sincerely,



Patricia Tomlinson  
Board Chair



Donna Osuch  
President & CPO

*Congratulations to all of tonight's award recipients*



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*Congratulations to all who*  
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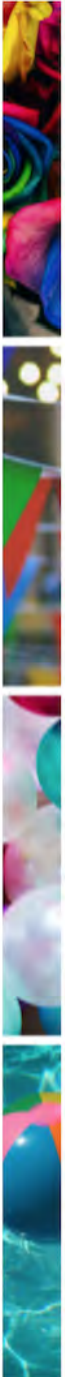
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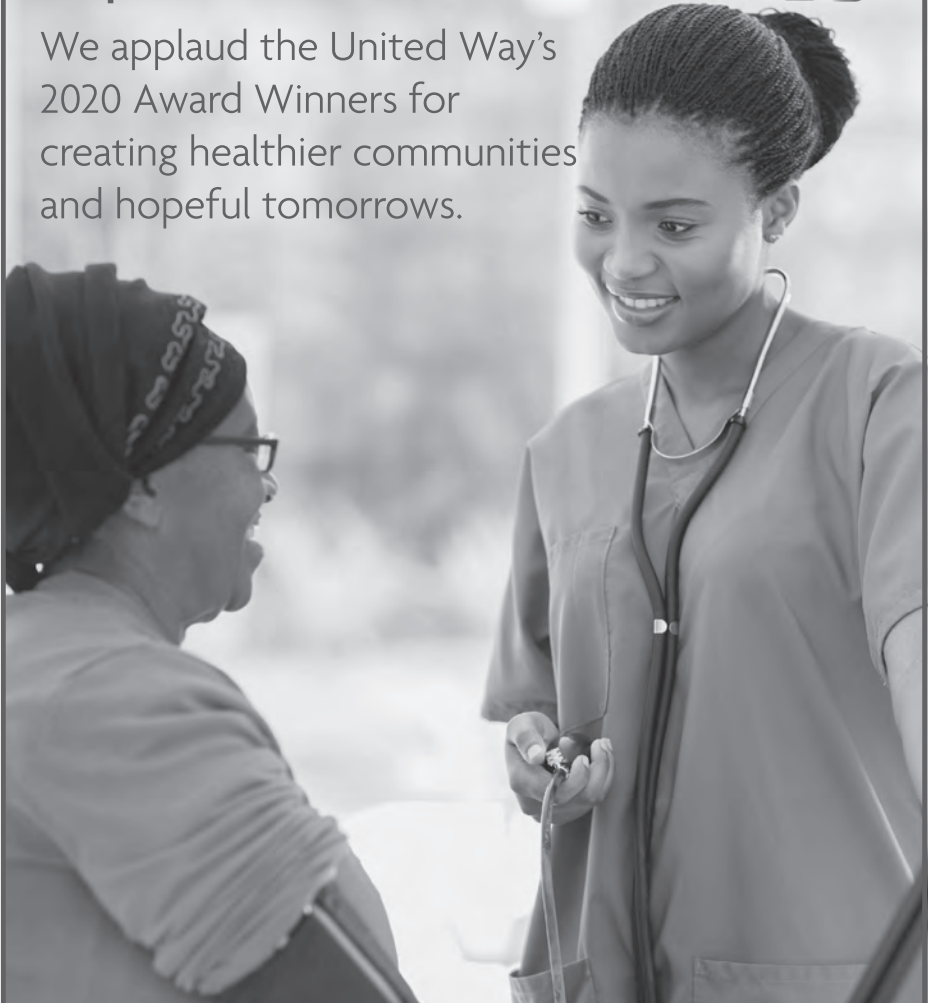


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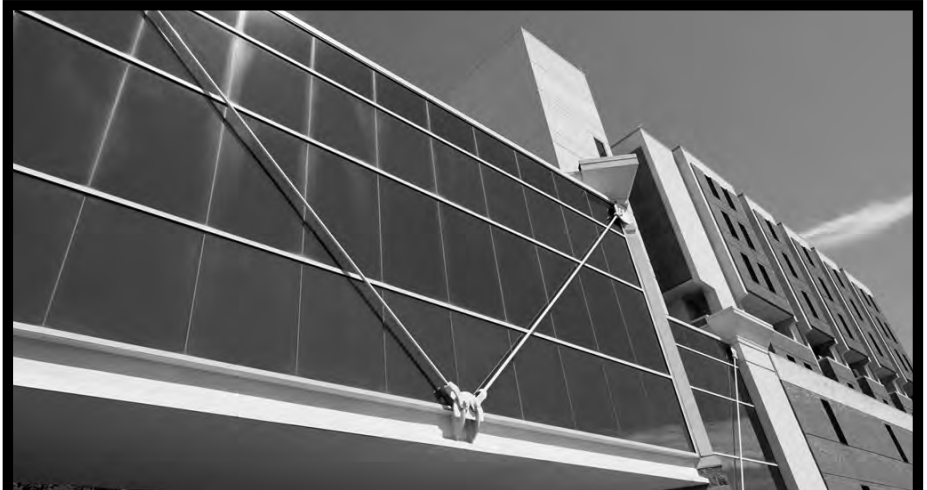


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*Heart.*

## CONGRATULATIONS

**to the 2020 Honorees!**

Thank you for creating lasting changes to improve lives in our communities.

***You are All Heart!***



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*Webster is proud to continue to support the United Way of West Central Connecticut. Remembering our friend and colleague Sheila Kelley for her love of Bristol and her legacy of always Living United.*

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*Congratulations 2020  
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Congratulations To All Award Recipients!

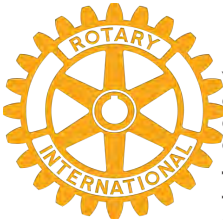


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Providing FamilyWise Prescription Discount Cards to the community, saving local residents an average of 40% on prescription drug costs.

Coordinating the West Central Connecticut TRIAD Program, which strives to improve the quality of life for older residents.

# FINANCIAL STABILITY



## FIGHTING FOR FAMILIES TO BECOME FINANCIALLY STABLE & INDEPENDENT

### HOW UNITED WAY IS WINNING:

Providing a backpack, school supplies and outfit to less fortunate children.

Offering Financial Education Classes on pertinent topics, such as budgeting, credit, and debt management.

Providing food and holiday gifts to struggling families.

Running a free tax preparation site that helps low and moderate income families get their taxes done for free while ensuring all tax credits are claimed.

## EDUCATION



FIGHTING TO  
HELP CHILDREN &  
YOUTH ACHIEVE  
THEIR POTENTIAL

### HOW UNITED WAY IS WINNING:

- Providing free books for children from low-income families.
- Helping to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- Helping middle school students transition to high school and young adulthood.
- Encouraging high school students to become leaders and address issues important to their peers.
- Providing youth with paid summer work experiences and career development opportunities.

## VOLUNTEER



RAISING OUR HANDS  
TO CHANGE THE GAME  
FOR EVERYONE

### HOW UNITED WAY IS WINNING:

- Our 2018 Day of Caring had a record-breaking 600 volunteers, who completed projects at 39 sites at 25 non-profit organizations in the communities we serve.
- Our new Partners in Caring Initiative matches local business teams with non-profits in need of volunteers for small projects.
- Our online Volunteer Center links individuals interested in volunteering with area non-profits in need of support.

Congratulations to all of this year's award recipients.

United Way is proud to honor the individuals and organizations who have worked together with us to provide a better life for everyone in our community through health, education and financial stability initiatives.



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## Follow United Way

*By following United Way online, you can help us spread our message and find new donors & volunteers. Please also take a moment to invite your friends to follow us!*



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Update your status with something fun about United Way or post a picture. Just remember to tag us in your posts! Or share one of our status updates with your friends.



Handle: @UnitedWayWCCT

Talk about your experience with United Way or post pictures! Use the hashtag **#LIVEUNITED** and put our handle in your post.



Username: @UNITEDWAYWCCT

Post pictures from our events or show how you are Living United! Use the hashtag **#LIVEUNITED** and put our username in your post!



**West Central Connecticut**

# **18th Annual Community Builders' Reception**

***Celebrating those individuals and organizations  
who have what it takes to Live United***

**Change Maker Award**

*Plymouth Keys For Kindness*

**Collaborative Excellence Award**

*Bristol Sports Hall of Fame*

**Rising Star Award**

*The Agape House*

**Spirit of Caring Award**

*Sheila Kelley, Posthumous*

**Youth Live United Awards**



# Special Thanks

## Community Builders' Reception Committee

**Rachel Beckwith**  
*Board of Directors*

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*MazzMedia*

**Jill Casey**  
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**Mike Rivers**  
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**Jena Doolittle**  
*Cigna HealthCare*

**Trish Tomlinson**  
*Thomaston Savings Bank*

**David Van Allen**  
*Webster Bank*

*Thanks to Laura Watson for video assistance and United Way Staff*

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## Behind the Scenes Spotlight

### MazzMedia / Productions for Change

Videos are the most effective means of reaching the general public, and the Productions for Change Initiative helps nonprofit organizations harness that power. Productions for Change (PFC) is spearheaded by Tom and Tony Mazzarella of MazzMedia and delivers a range of services: interactive video content, communications strategy and social media delivery that even small organizations can implement, and education for nonprofits on how to implement their own content. MazzMedia has been recognized by the Cinema in Industry Awards, National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, Oppenheim Best Toy Award, Parent's Choice Gold Award, Teachers' Choice Award, the Telly Awards and others.

### Secret Society of Cupcakes

Cheryl Simiakakis began Secret Society of Cupcakes as a small delivery service which just this year has grown into a full-fledged business serving beyond Bristol to all of CT. With a background as a professional artist and a lifetime love for sweets, Cheryl realized there was a demand for truly customized creative baked goods. She makes all confections from scratch to personalize any celebration, big or small. Her creative touches range from fresh fruit fillings to kid themed cakes. You can order by calling 413-522-6054 or find them on Facebook at [secretsofcupcakes](https://www.facebook.com/secretsofcupcakes). Cupcake samplings were given to recipients at award ceremony and sponsored by The Terryville Rotary Club.



# 2020-2021 Board of Directors

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Beatrice Nieves  
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# Let's Talk United Host



## Jena Doolittle

Jena Doolittle has been volunteering in the greater Bristol community for most of her life. She has been involved with the Women and Girls Fund, was a mentor in the Bristol School System, and has been part of the Bristol Boys and Girls Club Annual OM Show as a performer, Assistant Director and Director since 1977. Jena has served on many boards and committees in both Bristol and Terryville.

For over 20 years she has served on various volunteer committees for the United Way of West Central CT. She is currently the secretary of the Board of Directors and is on the Community Builders' Reception, Day of Caring, Golf and Personnel committees. Jena works in the National Marketing Segment at Cigna. As part of her 30 year career at Cigna, she has been a keynote speaker at several regional client and health related events. She has also led a Cigna team for the United Way Day of Caring for more than 20 years.

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Update your status with something fun about United Way or post a picture. Just remember to tag us in your posts! Or share one of our status updates with your friends.



Handle: @United WayWCCT

Talk about your experience with United Way or post pictures! Use the hashtag #LIVEUNITED and put our handle in your post.



Username: @Uwestcentralct

Post pictures from our events or show how you are Living United! Use the hashtag #LIVEUNITED and put our username in your post!

# Rising Star Award

*The United Way of West Central Connecticut Rising Star Award recognizes an individual, company or community collaboration that demonstrates accelerating impact in the community. The impact can be shown through an enhanced United Way campaign, increased volunteerism and/or improved community or program outcomes.*

## **The Agape House**

“There are no boundaries, no walls, no specific time to listen to the Lord. He will guide you and not judge you no matter where you are or what time of day it is.”

This ideology was what Christine Theborge and husband Eugene wanted to share as their outdoor ministry stretched into the woods, onto the railroad tracks and into encampments. Eugene and Christine started in homeless ministry work through their non-denominational church in 2012. What is now known as The Agape House created a judgment free, neutral ground for a unique, vulnerable population in Bristol. Many that have benefited from this type of offering have been homeless long-term or are people in need who had no such guidance or friendship.

As their crusade continued, they prayed for a physical space and that something would materialize. In 2016, George Carpenter offered office space downtown on Valley Street. The move helped give The Agape House an even larger presence within the community, and acquire their 501(c)(3) status. They were only open in the morning, by design, so they do not duplicate services already available within the city. Yet a cup of coffee was always available as was an ear to listen or someone to pray with. The location provided for food, clothing and administrative capabilities as they uncovered gaps for the increasing number of people they served.

Pastor Todd Williams from The Bridge Community Church joined the Board of Directors in 2016, offering additional help and spiritual guidance. In 2017, he offered The Agape House a larger space at their current location, 43 School Street. With six full functioning rooms (pre-COVID-19) they could provide a boutique style clothing room to fill a need and instill dignity, a food pantry to bridge the gap until they are connected with an established pantry, computer services with a volunteer that includes job search, transportation options and budgeting advice. And most importantly all of these rooms help foster a relationship with the people they serve.

While Christine was working a full-time sales job, she devoted hundreds of hours to the success of The Agape House. The non-profit group is solely funded by donations and grants and staffed 100% by volunteers. Over time she has built up a tremendous resource base and often teams up with other organizations to help The Agape House serve meals, sort donated clothes or help their clients with computer needs. These groups have included Veterans Strong, Bristol Central's Interact Club, the Exchange Club, Quota Club, etc.

Since the announcement of the Community Builders' Rising Star Award last February, Christine has accepted the full-time position as Executive Director at St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol with hopes that the two groups will mutually benefit the residents they serve.

# Collaborative Excellence Award

*The United Way of West Central Connecticut Collaborative Excellence Award recognizes the collective impact of a special collaboration in our community. The recipient of this award demonstrates exemplary partnership and collaboration.*



## BRISTOL SPORTS HALL of FAME OF CONNECTICUT

Bristol has long enjoyed a rich history in sports. Its founding fathers ensured that sports would always be an integral part of Bristol's way of life by donating land for parks and foundations to support them. Since the 1800s, Bristol's industries have supported athletic competition and have sponsored many sports teams. As a result, Bristol has been endowed with a rich sports history. These industrial leagues, Bristol school leagues, little leagues, church leagues and private clubs are in some way part of our everyday lives.

In 1997, John Fortunado and Bob Montgomery formed the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame (BSHOF) to honor Bristol's rich sports history. With John Smith as Executive Director, a Board of Directors was formed and a vision statement was created. Bob Montgomery served as the first president of the group, followed for many years by Dave Mills and currently led by Bob Kalat. Their vision statement affirmed its mission. "To permanently honor, document and preserve distinctive contributions and achievements to the sports heritage of Bristol".

Over the last three decades, the Sports Hall of Fame has honored nearly 60 local athletes whose record setting achievements have made long lasting impact on the community both on and off the field. With the establishment of the Leadership Council, the members work to help install leadership skills in those student-athletes that are identified by their coaches as the future leaders or captains of their teams. The group meets three times a year, once in the spring of their junior year, and then again in September and December of their senior year. They bring in speakers, discuss ethical situations, participate in activities, such as United Way's Day of Caring and discuss any problems the students may have encountered on their respective teams.

Additionally, BSHOF helps the community by sponsoring many activities that benefit both student-athletes and the adults who are involved in sports within the community. These programs are the result of the generous contributions from local businesses and individuals who recognize the value of promoting the accomplishments of Bristol athletes. Without community support, the BSHOF would not be able to continue the scholarship and educational programs that it sponsors. These events include: Six \$1,500 scholarships awarded at the Jack Hines Scholar-Athlete Dinner; The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame Annual Induction Ceremony; The Robert J. Fiondella Leadership Breakfast; The Community Speakers Programs; The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame Annual Scholarship; and annual Golf Tournament.

# Youth Live United Award

*The Youth Live United Award recognizes middle and high school students with a connection to United Way who have given back to their community through volunteerism. Living United is more than volunteering. It is a reminder that when we think beyond ourselves, we have the power to facilitate change. This special recognition serves as a powerful example to all students that hard work and volunteerism can make a difference. Barnes Group Inc. and Webster Bank are the 2020 sponsors of United Way of West Central Connecticut's Youth Live United Award.*

A youth representative from Bristol, Plainville, Plymouth and Regional School District #10 was selected to win their community's award.



**Bristol - Rachel Griffin,  
West Bristol Middle School  
Kids in the Middle**



**Plainville - Greyson Borra,  
Middle School of Plainville  
Kids in the Middle**



**Burlington - Nathan Misluk,  
Har-Bur Middle School  
Kids in the Middle**



**Plymouth - Jenna Wildman  
Eli Terry Jr. Middle School  
Kids in the Middle**

# Change Maker Award

*The United Way of West Central Connecticut Change Maker Award recognizes an individual, company or community collaboration that demonstrates the ability to create, catapult and/or implement positive change. The recipient of this award has transformed community conditions or improved program outcomes.*

## Keys For Kindness

In 2015, members of UCONN's PEP, also known as People Empowering People, took on the initiative to create the community-based kindness campaign "Plymouth Keys For Kindness." Vianna Hartley, Jennifer Yezielski, Donna Koser, Jennifer DeForest, Heather MacAulay and Tanya Long participated in a 10 week training program which focused on bettering the community. The program encourages growth in problem solving skills, parent/family relationships, and communication. During the program participants lead one or more projects that benefit their community while partnering with Plymouth Family Resource Center, the United Way of West Central CT and University of CT. Their mission is to promote kindness and inspire people to recognize its contagious benefits and power in order to make a difference in peoples' lives.

Kindness can be defined in many ways. Webster defines it as an act of kindness, the capacity of feeling for another's unhappiness or misfortune, or sympathetic concern for the well-being of others. Research has shown kindness has a positive effect not only on the recipient and the giver, but also the observer. This campaign was developed by PEP based on the town's unique history. Plymouth, CT is the former location to the Eagle Lock Co and home to the one of a kind Lock Museum of America.

Over the years this campaign has inspired many community members to go above and beyond for their peers. The efforts by these ladies and their outreach impacted two local businesses (Plymouth Oil Services and Grela Well Drilling) to create a "Kindness Counts" Scholarship for a graduating senior.

In 2015, the first "Kindness Key" was awarded to Dicki Zalewski, longtime Plymouth resident who served on the Human Services Commission, by Mayor David Merchant for her selfless acts of everyday kindness. Additional kindness projects seen around town over the years include kindness rock gardens at Lake Winfield; solo cup messages on school fences with Kids in the Middle, student safety and traffic monitoring at busy intersections within school zones, as well as spreading their signature kind purple messages throughout the community.





# Spirit of Caring Award

*The Spirit of Caring Award is given each year to an outstanding volunteer from the United Way of West Central Connecticut. Those chosen to receive the Spirit of Caring Award have demonstrated their capacity to care for people within the community through an unequalled spirit of volunteerism.*

## Sheila Kelley, Webster Bank

Sheila Kelley was one of a kind – warm, funny, caring, knowledgeable, and fiercely loyal. She was known by all as “Sheila from Webster Bank.” Sheila Kelley began her career at Bristol Savings Bank as a teller and stayed with the bank throughout its transitions for forty years. She was a caring boss, supportive colleague, and enjoyed volunteering in her community.

**Warm** – Customer service came naturally to Sheila. Every customer was treated like family regardless of the size of their bank account. Part of her charm was her ability to get to know everyone she dealt with on a personal level. She loved hearing people’s stories and accepted everyone without judgement. Sheila was fond of striking up conversations with people wherever she went. When her family went out to dinner and she became engrossed in conversation with a waiter or someone at a nearby table, her children would say, “Mom’s making a new friend.”

**Funny** – Many people have shared fond and funny memories of Sheila. For those who knew her, they will recall she was not the most patient person. Her eye rolls became famous within Webster Bank, and it is likely that if the conversation wasn’t going her way, the inevitable finger point would surface, and she would ask “are you done?!” Sheila loved a good time and was the life of the party at many Webster Bank Top Performers celebrations. As Bristol Mayor Ellen Zoppo Sassu said, she was “the irreverent big sister that said what we were all thinking.”

**Caring** – Sheila cared about her volunteer work with United Way of West Central CT’s Golf Tournament and campaign, the Central CT Chambers of Commerce Board of Directors, the Boys & Girls Club of Bristol and Brian’s Angels. But her real passion was the annual Bristol Carol Sing on the front steps of Webster Bank – every year – regardless of the weather. Around Halloween each year, Sheila would begin to harass the maintenance staff to make sure they had the lights restrung on the tree in front of the office so it would look festive for the event. She was so proud of the event and how it brings Bristol together to kick off the holiday season.

**Knowledgeable** – Sheila’s final title was Vice President and Bank Center Manager, but she could still work the teller window despite the many changes that occurred over the last forty years. She enjoyed opening first accounts for young people and promoting a strong financial foundation, taking time to help them understand how their accounts work. Some customers always asked for her, and she did not delegate but stopped what she was doing to help them. She even helped some customers balance their checkbooks.



**Fiercely loyal** – The preceding stories demonstrate Sheila’s fierce loyalty to Webster Bank and her customers and colleagues. She was also fiercely loyal to her Boston Red Sox and referred to them as if she was a member of the roster. Sheila’s biggest passion, however, was her family. Although easy going, Sheila would never hesitate to voice her displeasure and stand her ground if she felt her family or friends had been wronged. Almost every story she told had a connection to her children, husband, parents and extended family. She was the proudest mother, wife, daughter and daughter-in-law.

In March 2019, Sheila found out she was seriously ill. Just a few short weeks later, she passed away on April 28, 2019. Sheila Kelley touched the lives of so many in Bristol. We appreciate the stories shared by her adoring husband Peter and two adult children, Connor and Caitlin, as well as her Webster Bank family. She is truly missed by her family and many friends and customers, but we know she is watching over her loved ones – and hopefully not with too many eye rolls!

# Initiatives

## EDUCATION

### *Helping children and youth achieve their potential*

#### **Born Learning Campaign**

This early childhood campaign helps parents, grandparents and caregivers explore ways to turn every day moments into fun learning opportunities.

#### **Early Childhood Initiatives**

This initiative is helping to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The objectives of the early childhood initiatives are to increase the quality of existing early childhood education, to build strong connections between early care and elementary education, and to improve student's social, emotional and academic performance.

#### **“Kids in the Middle” Initiative**

Kids in the Middle (KIM) is a United Way and community initiative that helps middle school students successfully transition to high school and young adulthood. The goal of this partnership is to provide students with meaningful experiences and connect them with caring adults and the community.

#### **Youth Board**

The Youth Board is a leadership and service program for local high school students. Their mission is: A collaboration of high school students, dedicated to motivate, mobilize and serve the community to make dreams a reality.

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## HEALTH

### *Improving people's health and wellness*

#### **2-1-1**

2-1-1 is a free community service that is available online ([www.211ct.org](http://www.211ct.org)) and by phone 24 hours a day, every day of the year for information and crisis assistance.

#### **FamilyWise Prescription Drug Program**

United Way, in partnership with the America's Promise Alliance, provides FamilyWise prescription drug discount cards to the community. These free cards save 30% or more on the cost of prescriptions.

#### **Senior Initiative**

United Way was the lead organization in forming the West Central Connecticut TRIAD program. TRIAD is a partnership with our local towns and cities, police departments and senior centers, along with numerous community organizations. The TRIAD program strives to strengthen community partnerships that help to improve the quality of life, provide access to social service programs, reduce crime and diminish the fear of crime among the older residents of Bristol, Burlington, Plainville and Plymouth.



# Initiatives

## ***FINANCIAL STABILITY***

### ***Promoting financial stability and independence***

#### **Adopt-A-Child Back-to-School Program**

This program provides a backpack, school supplies and first day of school outfit to less fortunate children in our area.

#### **Bristol Task Group to End Family Homelessness**

The Task Group plans, advocates and takes action to prevent and resolve housing problems and needs of people in Bristol experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

#### **Financial Education Classes**

United Way works in conjunction with the CT Money School to offer and administer Financial Education Classes on different pertinent topics, including budgeting, credit, and debt management.

#### **Free Tax Assistance**

Our local VITA site provides free tax services to those who qualify and promotes unclaimed tax credits, bringing more money to families, and thus the community. MyFreeTaxes provides moderate income families the ability to complete their taxes independently for free.

#### **Joy of Sharing Programs**

This Thanksgiving, Christmas and Springtime program provides food and gifts to local agencies who distribute them to families who are struggling.

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## ***COMMUNITY-WIDE***

#### **COVID-19 Response Fund**

United Way of West Central Connecticut distributed \$200 virtual gift cards to more than 100 local households, that are struggling to meet their basic needs, including food and utilities. In addition, United Way has raised approximately \$50,000 to address the immediate and long-term needs facing our communities as a result of COVID-19

#### **Food Drive and Produce Distribution**

United Way collected non-perishable food in May for food pantries within our community affected by COVID-19. The successful drive was supported by Redman's Trailers Sales, Terryville Chevrolet, and Yankee-Harley Davidson. United Way and the City of Bristol partnered throughout the summer to distribute more than 3,800 boxes of fresh produce thanks to Farmers to Families, a USDA program.

# Award Winners from Past Years

Change Maker		Collaborative Excellence		Rising Star	
2018	Town of Plainville	2018	Connecticut 211	2018	Young Professionals for United Way/PYVOT
2019	For Goodness Sake	2019	Stock our Shelters	2019	Productions for Change

## Spirit of Caring

1994	Edward Lorensen	2000	Richard Larkin	2010	Shirley Osle
	Sue Millerick		Katherine Plourde	2011	Thomas Mazzarella
1995	Clifford Fulton	2001	John Smith	2012	Mark Ziogas
	Howard Usher	2002	Anthony Mattioli	2013	John-David Scarritt
1996	Jeanne Radcliff	2003	Thomas O. Barnes	2014	Chief Karen Krasicky
	George Choiniere	2004	John Driscoll	2015	Bryan Ricci, CPA
1997	Mark Cheshire	2005	Michael Tobin	2016	Byron Treado
1998	NAPCO, Inc.	2006	Jack Hines	2017	Michael Rivers
	Activities Comm.	2007	Anthony Malavenda	2018	Dr. Susan Moreau
1999	Employees of Bristol Hospital	2008	Theodore Scheidel	2019	Susan Sadecki, MBA
		2009	Lisa Aiudi		



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SHARING

**Help your neighbors in need this holiday season  
by donating food products**

**Collection Dates: November 9th & 10th, 2020**

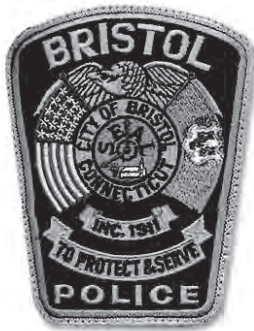
**9am - 4pm**

***Drop off at:***

***The United Way of West Central Connecticut***

***440 North Main Street, Bristol***

***GPS: 50 Federal Street, Bristol***



# The Bristol Police Union

is honored to partner with the

United Way of West Central Connecticut.

The men and women of the Bristol Police Department value our relationships within our community. We are committed to excellence in delivering quality and progressive law enforcement services.

Effective community police relationships, communications and engagement are critical components to our success.

We thank the United Way of West Central Connecticut for providing us with resources to accomplish our mission within our community.

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