Growing a Love of Reading

“Children get drawn to the space,” said Eileen. “It’s common to see a child leading her mother to the Literacy Treehouse.”

According to staff, the Literacy Treehouse is one of the most popular areas of the Museum, attracting children and families to the museum. Children can snuggle up with a book plucked from a "Story Nest" that is within the Treehouse. Children in character.

A young visitor to the Literacy Treehouse greets a woodland support platform from the Constellation Tree.

At the Literacy Treehouse, hundreds of children a month are drawn to the treehouse as a space integral to the success of children in our Northwest Corner, said Guy Rovezzi. “Programs that develop a love of reading form the foundation for literacy programs. An additional $10,000 grant was provided through an anonymous donor advised fund to support the Riverton School Literacy Treehouse through the Community Foundation." The Literacy Treehouse is where the children come to find a quiet moment, to read, and to be thoughtful in a place.

The Museum's Board was inspired to build the Literacy Treehouse to encourage and inspire children with the importance of reading and story telling. The Literacy Treehouse is a space dedicated to providing children with a quiet, safe, and inspiring environment to develop a love of reading. The Literacy Treehouse is open to the public and is available for events and programs throughout the year. The Literacy Treehouse is one of the most popular areas of the Museum.

The Museum was awarded $20,000 in two installments from the Marion Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund for the Literacy Treehouse. This grant was awarded in 2015 and 2016.

For more than 45 years, you have shaped the Community Foundation. We have helped you research emerging issues, launch initiatives and forge partnerships to address critical needs. Our community has become stronger and more vibrant through the establishment of funds and generous annual donations. Through the work of talented community volunteers, leaders, and through thoughtful grant-making in support of hardworking and imaginative nonprofit organizations.

The Community Foundation is instrumental in making the Literacy Treehouse a reality. This is the idea that children in the Northwest Corner are connected with literature and are developing a love for reading. The Literacy Treehouse is located in the Northwest Corner and is open to the public. The Literacy Treehouse is a space dedicated to providing children with a quiet, safe, and inspiring environment to develop a love of reading.

The Literacy Treehouse is one of the most popular areas of the Museum. Children can snuggle up with a book plucked from a "Story Nest" that is within the Treehouse. Children in character.

Community Foundation Fundholders Seed the Literacy Tree House

Throughout the building of the Literacy Treehouse, more than seven funds of the Community Foundation supported Kidplay Children's Museum in its effort to build a place where children could be drawn to connect with literature.

The Community Foundation was awarded a $20,000 grant in two installments from the Carlton D. Fryer and Jenny R. Fryer Fund of the Community Foundation for the construction of the Literacy Treehouse. A grant from the Marlon Wm. and Alice Edwards Fund of the Community Foundation supported the design and creation of interior spaces in the Museum as well as program supplies for literacy programs. An additional $10,000 grant was provided through an anonymous donor advised fund of the Community Foundation to support the completion of the project.

Community Foundation Fundholders Seed the Literacy Tree House

The Community Foundation was instrumental in making the Literacy Treehouse a reality. The idea that children in the Northwest Corner are connected with literature and are developing a love for reading today in the Literacy Treehouse because generous, thoughtful people made gifts to the Community Foundation years ago is a testament to the power and flexibility of unrestricted giving.

Visit the viewing of the Literacy Treehouse Disability at northwestcf.org/literacy

Explore the benefits of a donor advised fund at northwestcf.org/donor-advised

Visit us on Facebook
Cotiviti, Community Foundation Deliver Technology to Aspiring Minds

When Emil “Moe” Renzullo Jr. was five years old, he bounded out of Emil and Colleen Renzullo’s car for his first day of summer camp at Camp LARC. After having spent the first five years of his life in and out of Connecticut Children’s Medical Center recovering from surgeries to treat a series of intestinal medical issues, Moe was a happy and boisterous little boy ready to have some fun.

Moe attended summer camp through the Litchfield Arc (LARC) for two weeks that year. Although his parents, Emil and Colleen Renzullo, were apprehensive about sending him to summer camp, every day when he came home, happy, tried and dirty, Moe would ask, “When can I go back to camp?” From that summer on, Moe attended Camp LARC all eight weeks of the summer: swimming, skateboarding, and more often than not, leading campers in their morning cheer.

“Moe was known for his enthusiasm, love, and caring ways,” said Katherine Marchand-Beyrer, Camp MOE Director and LARC Director of Community Support.

After seven years of good health and happy summers with his friends, Moe was diagnosed with leukemia. He was admitted to the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center for treatment. Eight weeks later, Moe was gone.

“Emil [Moe] was a bright light,” said Emil Renzullo Senior, “… always happy, always smiling. He had an amazing ability to draw people together, to make friends, anywhere with anyone.”

Moe passed away at the age of 12, but his light spread through the Northwest Corner bringing together parents, teachers, camp counselors, friends and family who wanted to honor his life. Cycling enthusiasts scheduled a fundraising event, which quickly became a bike, run, and walk fundraising as community members were drawn to the event and its goal—to raise money to send kids to Moe’s favorite place, Camp LARC.

That first year, in just a few months, the community raised more than $75,000 for camperships for Camp LARC. Emil and Colleen quickly worked with Community Foundation staff to establish the Miles for Moe Fund. Simultaneously, LARC launched the first independent reverse-integrated summer camp in New England. To honor Moe and the community that loved him, LARC named its new summer camp Camp MOE.

“Moe always called Camp LARC ‘my camp,’ said Emil Renzullo. "Now you see signs all over town for Camp MOE. It really is his camp."

Camp MOE has grown from 50 campers to hundreds of campers each summer. The Miles for Moe Fund continues to grow as well. Established as a donor-advised fund, the Fund continues to support camperships at Camp MOE, as well as other causes affecting children in the Northwest Corner.

Emil, Colleen, and a slew of volunteers manage the annual fundraisers, including the Harvest Fest 5k, held in September, for the fund that has provided $850,000 in camperships. Grants from the Fund also supported children of parents being treated for cancer at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, purchased thermometers for the Medical Center’s treatment rooms, and supported the purchase of toys for children having medical procedures at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

“They for Moe have become what it is because of the Community Foundation,” said Emil Renzullo. “As far as we have an idea or a question, staff was there to help. Life is short, and it’s about experiences. I want to raise as much money as possible, to make one of the biggest funds at the Community Foundation—to help as many children as I can.”

Corporate donor Cotiviti has donated 40 desktop computers through the Community Foundation to Winchester Public Schools. The computers will be placed in the Batcheller Early Learning Education Center and the Pearson Middle School. In the Batcheller Early Learning Education Center, the computers replace much older computers and learning hub that enables students to complete research topics online and work on cloud-based creative projects.

“The Winchester Public Schools are extremely grateful for the donation from Cotiviti through the Community Foundation,” said Joe Cifaldi, Winchester Public Schools technology coordinator.

The desktop computers were part of a larger donation of more than 200 refurbished Lenovo laptops and desktop computers valued at more than $20,000. The computers were donated to the Community Foundation to be distributed to nonprofits throughout Northwest Connecticut.

“We are a community camp, and we could not run without the support of our community,” said Katherine. “We help as many families as we can to send their children to camp.”

“Support from the Community Foundation validates that we are on the right path and puts a greater responsibility on us to continue to improve,” said Katherine. “We have so many goals for the future. “We are a community camp, and we could not run without the support of our community.”

Corporate donor Cotiviti has donated 40 desktop computers through the Community Foundation to Winchester Public Schools. The computers will be placed in the Batcheller Early Learning Education Center and the Pearson Middle School.

In the Batcheller Early Learning Education Center, the computers replace much older machines in the school’s computer lab. In the Pearson Middle School, the computers will be used to create computer hubs in the school library as part of the school’s vision of transitioning the library into a research, creativity and learning hub that engages students to discover research topics online and work on cloud-based creative projects.

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Torringon Family Inspires Community, Helps Local Children

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“Moe was known for his enthusiasm, love and caring ways,” said Katherine Marchand-Bayer, Camp MOE Director and LARC Director of Community Support.

After seven years of good health and happy summers with his friends, Moe was diagnosed with leukemia. He was admitted to the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center for treatment. Eight weeks later, Moe was gone. "Emil [Moe] was a bright light," said Emil Renzullo Senior, “always happy, always smiling. He had an amazing ability to draw people together, to make friends, anywhere with anyone.”

Moe passed away at the age of 12, but his light spread through the Northwestern Connecticut community. Parents, teachers, camp counselors, friends and family who wanted to honor his life. Cycling enthusiasts scheduled a cycling fundraiser, which quickly became a bike, run and walk fundraiser as community members were drawn to the event and its goal—to raise money to send kids to Moe’s favorite place, Camp LARC.

That first year, in just a few months, the community raised more than $25,000 for camperships for Camp LARC. Emil and Colleen quickly worked with Community Foundation staff to establish the Miles for Moe Fund. Simultaneously, LARC launched the first independent reverse-integrated summer camp in New England. To honor Moe and the community that loved him, LARC named its new summer camp Camp MOE.

“Moe always called Camp LARC ‘my camp,’ said Emil Renzullo. ‘Now you see signs all over town for Camp MOE. It really is his camp.’

Camp MOE has grown from 50 campers to hundreds of campers each summer. The Miles for Moe Fund continues to grow as well. Established as a donor-advised fund, the Fund continues to support camperships at Camp MOE, as well as other causes affecting children in the Northwestern Connecticut.

Emil, Colleen, and a slew of volunteers manage the annual fundraisers, including the Harvest Fest 5K, held in September, for the Fund that has provided $80,500 in camperships.

Grants from the Fund also supported parents of children being treated for cancer at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, purchased thermometers for the Medical Center’s treatment rooms, and supported the purchase of toys for children having medical procedures at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

“The Miles for Moe has become what it is because of the Community Foundation,” said Emil Renzullo. “And before we had an idea or a question, staff was there to help. Life is short, and it’s about experiences. I want to raise as much money as possible, to make this one of the biggest funds at the Community Foundation—to help as many families and children as I can.”

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The desktop computers were part of a larger donation of more than 200 refurbished Lenovo laptop and desktop computers valued at more than $10,000. The donations were facilitated by Cotiviti’s Community Foundation to be distributed to nonprofits throughout Northwest Connecticut.

From June 27th through August 19th hundreds of children from Litchfield County sall relax energetically and en masse onto the more than 165 acres of woods and fields adjacent to Winst Pond in Torrington to experience summer at Camp MOE. A program of LARC, Camp MOE brings together children with differing needs for a fun-filled summer in the Litchfield hills in the spirit of acceptance and respect for all.

“Camp MOE brings children together regardless of their strengths and weaknesses,” said Katherine.

“Children should play together and grow together every step of the way, and what better way to encourage acceptance than to bring everyone together in a fun outdoor environment.”

LARC’s summer camp has been in operation for more than 40 years, but it wasn’t always inclusive. In its early years of operation, it was a summer camp exclusively for special-needs children. In the late 1970s, campers shared camp grounds, transportation and other services with surrounding camps. Children activities were operated separately until one inquisitive five-year-old “Chipmunk” camper pointed across the field, looked up at his counselor, and asked, “Why can’t I play with those kids over there?”

“Bit by bit we started having the children play together,” said Katherine. “It took us years to completely integrate our programs. Once we had all of the children together, we never looked back.”

LARC staff and volunteers developed a proposal to create a reverse-integrated summer camp and position LARC as a leader in integrating summer camping for children with and without special needs.

LARC was awarded a $10,000 grant from the Catherine D. Fyler and Jenny R. Fyler Fund and the Eva M. Cota Fund to support the creation of its new camp. “We were fortunate enough to get the opportunity to show that we could do it,” said Katherine. “Without support from the Community Foundation, we really would have struggled.”

LARC’s new inclusive summer camp, the first in New England to offer an integrated program for children with and without special needs, was named Camp MOE in honor of camper Emil “Moe” Renzullo, who passed away in April of 2010.

View the slideshow of Camp MOE at northwestcf.org/campprevo.

Now in its sixth year, Camp MOE is a favorite among Litchfield County children. During any given summer about thirty percent of Camp MOE campers have special needs. Trained staff are on-hand to work with campers with autism, intellectual disabilities, ADHD, and behavioral difficulties, while they experience a summer filled with swimming, arts and crafts, music, dance, archery, gaga, boating, rock, lego, golf and woodworking, alongside their typical peers.

Camp MOE continues to grow steadily with many campers receiving financial assistance; often from Community Foundation funds, including the Miles for Moe Fund, the Delta Foundation Fund, and the Eva M. Cota Fund. “Requests are high for financial aid,” said Katherine. “We help as many families as we can to send their children to camp.”

“Support from the Community Foundation validates that we are on the right path and puts a greater responsibility on us to continue to improve,” said Katherine. “We have so many goals for the future.”

“We are a community camp, and we could not run without the support of our community.”

Conclusion

Betty Rivera

Betty was a member of the Torrington Historical Society, the Torrington Historical Preservation Commission, the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital Auxiliary, the Connecticut AROO Retirees, the University of Connecticut’s Litchfield County Office, and the Quota Club. She was a past president of the Torrance Women’s Club and the Torrington Council of Catholic Women.

“Torrington was their life,” said Susan for what a second cousin and close friend. “They were passionate about art and music.”

In 2014, Betty passed away leaving the remainder of her estate and her half of “Red’s” estate to Betty. In the Spring of 2014, Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Rivela passed away, but she left a legacy that continues her creative life’s work and honors her brother and sister. Through her bequest language in her will, Ms. Rivera established The Rivera Family Fund for Arts and Music, an endowed scholarship fund that will support art and music students in the Northwest Corner forever.


What matters to you? Tell us at northwestcf.org/contact

Contribute to your favorite fund online at northwestcf.org

Be What’s Possible…

Make the Northwestern Corner part of your family.

By including the Community Foundation in your will or trust, you can continue your lifetime story through the causes that matter most to you. Working with your advisor, you can include language in your will or trust specifying that a gift be made to the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation as part of your estate plan.

You can support the causes you care about and make a difference to the community you love in several ways:

• Gift of a percentage of your estate
• Gift of a specific dollar amount or asset

Visit our website northwestcf.org for more information, contact Bradford Hoar, VP of Philanthropic Services at bhoar@northwestcf.org or (860) 626-1245.
Growing a Love of Reading in the Treehouse

Tucked away inside the colorful and boisterous land of play that is KidsPlay Children’s Museum on Main Street in Torrington, there is a haven of calm on high. The Literacy Treehouse in the back corner of the museum is a fantasy treehouse that encourages children to engage in imaginative role-playing, interactive games and quiet reading in cozy nooks.

“It’s not a run-through place,” said Ellen Marriott, KidsPlay Children’s Museum Director. “It’s a slowdown and a thoughtful place.”

The Museum’s Board was inspired to build the fantasy literacy space among the many practical and hands-on areas of the museum after evaluating the importance of literacy skills in child development.

According to the Connecticut Commissioner on Children, at-risk youth often experience literacy difficulty or significant reading problems. Forty-three percent of people who struggle with literacy live in poverty, and two-thirds of students who cannot read by the 4th grade are likely to experience incarceration or depend on welfare later in life.

“Developing a love of reading is integral to the success of children in our Northwest Corner,” said Guy Rovezzi, President. “Programs that work to address the literacy gap in Connecticut are paramount to the current and future vibrancy of our communities.”

Community Foundation Fundholders Seed the Literacy Tree House

Throughout the building of the Literacy Treehouse, more than seven funds of the Community Foundation supported KidsPlay Children’s Museum in its effort to build a place where children would be drawn to connect with literature.

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“The Community Foundation was instrumental in making the Literacy Treehouse a reality,” said Ken Merz, Board President, KidsPlay Children’s Museum. “The idea that children in the Northwest Corner are connecting with literature and developing a love for reading today in this treehouse because generous, thoughtful people made gifts to the Community Foundation years ago is a testament to the power and flexibility of unrestricted giving.”

View the building of the Literacy Treehouse slideshow at northwestcf.org/literacy

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Over the years, our solvency and principles have remained unchanged. We seek to enrich the quality of life for residents of Northwest Connecticut by inspiring local philanthropy, convening stakeholders in community wellness, energizing the regional nonprofit network and fostering collaborative funding partnerships.

Our new name and our new logo represent our immutable service to Northwest Connecticut—service that continues to forge new and innovative approaches to community leadership, to preserve and protect philanthropic partnerships—service that is deeply rooted in our Northwest Corner.

Founded in 1969 through a $15,000 gift from the Torrington Club, the Community Foundation has grown through the benevolence of our community members and the financial stewardship of our staff and volunteers—to a $90 million endowment. In 2015 supported the Northwest Corner with $4.3 million in grants and scholarships.

“We look forward to tomorrow’s challenges with a commitment to performance and a vision of leadership that make us Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation (Northwest CF) in name, in spirit, and in practice.”

Questions or comments? Contact Ken Merz, Board President, at ken@merzgroup.com or (860) 866.6245

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