In December, the Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls (CCWG) in partnership with The United State of Women Summit (USOW) and the Governor’s Council on Women and Girls convened over 250 women, girls and allies for Galvanize Connecticut. Attendees were provided with hands-on training to equip women with the tools needed to keep fighting for gender equity. Guests engaged in inspiring conversations and celebrated women making change in their communities. Featured speakers included former Senior Advisor to President Obama Valerie Jarrett, President and CEO of the Ms. Foundation Teresa Younger and other dynamic women from across the state and country alongside Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz who chairs the Governor’s Council on Women and Girls. Galvanize Connecticut was the last of four “action sessions” of the Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls, a statewide network of women-serving organizations made possible with support from the state’s women’s funds, including a leadership commitment of $40,000 from the Community Fund for Women & Girls. Learn more about USOW’s work at the www.theunitedstateofwomen.org.
Campaign for Paid Family Leave Prevails

#MakeCTNext was the rallying call for activists across Connecticut as the Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) lead the Campaign for Paid Family Leave -- Connecticut lawmakers answered their call. In 2019, Connecticut became the seventh state to pass comprehensive paid family and medical leave and the Community Fund for Women & Girls was right there advocating for it through its grant support of CWEALF. Public Act No. 19-25: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave establishes a statewide system of job protected paid leave for workers who need to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for themselves or a loved one.

The Campaign for Paid Family Leave, a coalition of more than 75 organizations and 100 small businesses, has fought for the passage of this legislation since 2013. The coalition plans to continue its work through the implementation stage. Workers will have access to paid leave beginning in 2022. The program will be employee funded through payroll deductions up to 0.5% of their weekly earnings up to 0.5% of their weekly earnings up to 40 times the minimum wage. Workers earning minimum wage will receive 95 percent of their weekly earnings up to 40 times the minimum wage and workers making above minimum wage will receive 60 percent of their weekly earnings above 40 times the minimum wage.

What You Should Know

- Workers of any sex or gender identity can take paid family and medical leave.
- Paid family or medical leave can be used to recover from a serious health condition, welcome a new child, care for a family member with a serious illness, serve as an organ or bone marrow donor or care for an injured military service member.
- Workers can take leave to care for any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of those family relationships.

According to CWEALF, paid family and medical leave attracts and retains a talented workforce, removes the financial burden from small businesses, improves health outcomes for families and lessens the burden for workers of color who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not provide paid leave. The United States is one of two remaining countries in the world that does not provide paid family and medical leave nationally. Connecticut’s paid leave law is one of the most comprehensive paid leave programs in the country.

Volunteer Highlight: Jane Shaw

Jane Shaw says she was immediately drawn to the mission of the Community Fund for Women & Girls and the passion and visionary leadership of the women supporting it.

“It was simple and powerful, helping women and girls in our community,” Shaw says. “The Fund’s connection to The Community Foundation gave it immediate credibility.”

Shaw was one of the 92 original fund founders, who in 1995 pledged to pool their resources to establish the Fund. She says she has learned a lot since the beginning.

About the Fund’s membership, Shaw says, “their passion stems from many sources and has taught me so much about what it takes to bring about the changes we need to offer opportunities to all women and girls. The depth and breadth of work done by nonprofits in our area is powerful and critically needed.”

A former Fund advisory board member, Shaw thought she would lead by example by starting her own fund, the Jane Steidley Shaw Fund, to support the Community Fund for Women & Girls’ grantmaking activities.

“I hoped that I might encourage others to start a fund of their own, determining what is most important to them,” Shaw says. “Philanthropy is not just for the one percent! It helped me focus my own giving priorities.” There are 25 funds like Shaw’s.

Support of the Fund, will continue after Shaw’s life through a bequest.

“When thinking about a bequest, I wanted to feel confident that I was choosing something that would continue to be strong over many years,” Shaw says. “I know I can depend on the Fund and the Foundation to continue as dynamic forces in our community. I love the way the Fund has grown, staying true to its mission while also responding to the changing needs of women and girls.”

Shaw is proud of the strides the Community Fund for Women & Girls has made and acknowledges there is more to accomplish.

“The Fund is every bit as needed today as it was 25 years ago when it was founded. Women and girls are facing not only long-standing obstacles but also new ones from a rapidly changing, often hostile environment. While progress has been made, so much more remains to be done.”

Nonprofit Partner Spotlight: Women & Family Life Center

The Women and Family Life Center (W&FLC) has worked to empower women and families in the face of challenges and transition for nearly 30 years. Since 2000, the Community Fund for Women & Girls has supported W&FLC, providing over $40,000 in grants for workshops and programming. The most recent grant, a $7,000 grant in 2019, supported the continuation and expansion of W&FLC’s one-on-one financial consulting program. The program helps clients take control of their finances. Over the last three decades, W&FLC has impacted the lives of over 15,000 individuals, helping them gain strength, knowledge and skills to thrive.