

Community Matters

Doing Good in Your Community



It's a great feeling to have a positive impact on the community in which you work and live. That is certain with respect to the Community Investment Committee (CIC) of The Guilford Foundation (TGF) and its Competitive Grant Process. This year 22 organizations received a total of \$94,000 in grants. As a result, impactful work will continue to be done in Guilford, including funds for mental health programs, before and after school care, a community nature school, and much more.

A Daunting Task

This year, the 7 members of the CIC had the daunting task of reviewing requests for over \$219,000 from a diverse pool of 27 applicants when only \$94,000 was available. As Alexander Sulpasso (CIC Chair as well as Senior Operations Manager at Guilford Savings Bank) explains, the CIC had to make some very difficult decisions. "It's a lot of work in a very short period of time. There was a lot of back and forth," he notes. Some grant requests were only partially funded to be able to accommodate more grantees. "It drives a

lot of discussion," Sulpasso adds. "Everyone takes their role on the committee so seriously because we know we have the trust of the community. We are stewards of the community."

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are established in December for the upcoming grant year cycle (the application deadline was March 11 this year.) The guiding principles set the tone on where investments will be made and how to assess the programs that will make the greatest impact on the local community. The prior-

ities for 2022 were basic needs, community wellbeing, child and youth development, JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion,) arts and culture, and economic recovery and development.

Shifting Needs

"Needs are always shifting," underscores Sulpasso. The guiding principles allow the CIC to be dynamic and flexible to impact the quality of life of people in the community and to address issues to promote the community. While the COVID-19 pandemic required the CIC to look at severe, short-term needs this year reflected a return to quasi-normalcy. "It wasn't about worrying which businesses would go under," says Sulpasso. "We were able to focus on things like mental health, youth programs... we were back to arts and culture and programs with more long-lasting effect."

How Funds are Spent Yearly

Impact reports are required of grant recipients on an annual basis to establish how the funds were spent and their impact. Sulpasso remembers one report in particular. The grant was for a scholarship with the Guilford Center for Children. As a result, one child received access to the school and childcare. "It was great to hear how great the student did," recalls Sulpasso. "But what we didn't realize was the ripple effect of that grant." The child's parents were entrepreneurs trying to keep their business going. Without the childcare provided, the business would have gone under. "So, the grant was for the child, but it had a huge impact... on the parents, the business, and the community as a whole. It was rewarding in seeing what we can do together... It's an amazing feeling to know that you are part of the process."



A sampling of the many recipients who have received grants.

