



Working to benefit the community of Westbrook and its residents

LOOKING BACK ON 2019, AND AHEAD TO 2020

The Westbrook Foundation Celebrates 35 Years of Giving Back to the Community

The Westbrook Foundation marked its 35th year of supporting the community in 2019, and it's entering 2020 in its strongest position in decades, Chair Paul Winch says.

“Prudent, conservative financial planning involving a careful mix of bonds and equities and regular consultation with an investment advisor have put us in an enviable position. We’re able to provide substantial scholarships to our town’s young people, support the many organizations whose work promotes the wellbeing of Westbrook residents, and to donate to impactful projects like the upcoming Middlesex Habitat for Humanity build



Current and emeritus Westbrook Foundation Board members gathered in the summer of 2019 during a celebration in their honor hosted by the town.

[see story inside this issue],” says Winch.

In 2019, the Foundation awarded \$190,098 in grants during its fall and spring cycles. Students received \$144,500 in scholarships, with the total number of individual scholarships available now nearing two dozen. In 2020, the Foundation projects that it will give out more than \$400,000 in funding to benefit the community through grants, scholarships, and donations.

“If you belong to an organization that has a great idea for a community project, or that sees a strong need for particular programming, but you’re struggling with funding, now is the time to consider applying for a grant from the Foundation,” advises Winch. “Likewise, parents should encourage their college- and trade school-bound children to apply for the many scholarships the Foundation offers, and adults who live in town and are considering grad school or continuing education should remember that we also offer scholarships specifically for that purpose. These are opportunities that not many communities—let alone communities the size of Westbrook—can provide for their citizens. Thanks to the generosity and forethought of Barbara Spencer, whose estate provisions helped to establish the Foundation in 1984, we’re in this unique position. It’s a real privilege, and we look forward to touching even more lives in the years ahead.”

Local Postal Customer



FROM THE CHAIR



This is my first letter as chair of the Westbrook Foundation, and I'm pleased to share some news with you about how our organization has been doing in the past year. The Foundation is made up of nine Westbrook

residents, all of whom are committed to building on the solid groundwork that has been laid by our emeritus board members across the 35 years since the Foundation was founded in 1984. Our mission is simple: We aim to do the greatest good for the residents of Westbrook.

I'm happy and proud to report that the Foundation is doing very well, and I point to the following key metrics as evidence: In 2019, the Westbrook Foundation gave back to the community in excess of \$340,000 through a combination of grants and donations to local public organizations and scholarships to Westbrook residents pursuing further education at colleges, universities, trade schools, and in graduate-level programs. You'll find stories about many of the grants we awarded this past year throughout this report.

As we move further into 2020, we continue to dedicate our efforts to supporting the citizens of Westbrook. Our Grants Committee, led by An-Ming Truxes, has been hosting one-on-one sessions to advise prospective applicants. Meanwhile, our Scholarship Committee has been working closely with the Westbrook High School Guidance Department to ensure that our scholarship materials are up to date for students graduating this spring. Our goal is to award \$150,000 in scholarships to high school seniors this year.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report. If you have any questions about the Foundation, I encourage you to email info@westbrookfoundation.org. Our new Foundation Administrator, Meredith Crawford, will be happy to assist you.

Best wishes for 2020.

Sincerely,
Paul Winch



A Contribution to the Future

An individual or an organization who makes a gift or bequest to The Westbrook Foundation can be assured that they have made a contribution that will benefit future generations.

For more information about The Westbrook Foundation, visit www.westbrookfoundation.org.

Flexibility in Giving

CASH: An outright cash gift to The Westbrook Foundation qualifies for federal income tax deductions in the year of the gift.

SECURITIES: Stocks and bonds that have increased in value may be given to The Westbrook Foundation. The donor receives a tax deduction for the value of the gift at market value, and avoids capital gains taxes.

BEQUEST: Bequests of cash, securities, or property may be made to The Westbrook Foundation either as a specific sum or as a percentage of the donor's estate.

MEMORIAL GIFTS: A gift to The Westbrook Foundation is a meaningful way to honor a special person or create a memorial to a loved one.

LIFE INSURANCE/CHARITABLE GIFT

ANNUITIES: Donors may name The Westbrook Foundation as a beneficiary of life insurance policies. In the case of annuities, the donor may choose to retain income during their lifetime.

CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST: A donor may designate The Westbrook Foundation as the beneficiary of this type of trust and still receive income during their lifetime. Donor receives tax deduction in the year the trust is established, and reduces estate taxes.



HELPING PRESERVE A RICH PART OF THE TOWN'S HISTORY, WHILE MEETING MODERN-DAY DEMANDS



It's impossible to miss. Perched atop a gently sloped hill on the Town Green's west side, the First Congregational Church stands sentry, just as it has since 1894.

"The church has a rich history, with much to celebrate and cherish" says Church Board of Trustees Chair Jim Dahl, noting that, though its current physical structure was built in 1894, the church traces its roots to the community back to the 1600s. "It's an important part of Westbrook that should rightfully be preserved, but, as with every aspect of life, change is inevitable and a willingness to embrace it is important."

Finding a balance between preserving its history and meeting the demands of the modern day has been critical to the church. It's meant maintaining the building's period details, upgrading its infrastructure, and addressing safety issues to ensure the congregation can enjoy the building and its religious and community programming.

That's where the Westbrook Foundation comes in. In the past few years, the Foundation has awarded grant funding to the church to refurbish its stained-glass windows and iconic clock tower. Most recently, in 2019, the church received a \$30,000 grant to inspect, repair, and replace all of the

systems and components essential to fire detection in the building.

"This will ensure the safety of all who use the building," says Dahl, including not only those who attend worship services and member activities, but also people who visit the church on Friday nights, when it serves as a meal site for the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries, and those attending one of the many support groups run by outside agencies that meet at the church.

"Our church is truly a community gathering place and by upgrading the fire suppression system, we hope to expand community outreach," says Dahl.

He says the support from the Westbrook Foundation enables the church to focus on its mission, "reaching out in love and service to God, each other, and the community."

"The church is especially grateful for the important partnership it enjoys with the Westbrook Foundation," which "allows us to reinforce our commitment to serving Westbrook and its citizens."

FOUNDATION GIFT WILL HELP ENSURE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF TOWN'S FIRST HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOME

A .62-acre parcel of land at 382 Hammock Road North will soon be the site of a brand new, 1,200-square-foot, three-bedroom ranch home that a local family selected by Middlesex Habitat for Humanity (MHFH) will call their own. It took MHFH three years of active property hunting to find this site, and it will take more than 250 volunteers to construct the home, which will be made energy efficient in part thanks to a \$20,000 donation from the Westbrook Foundation.

"Middlesex Habitat designs homes that utilize energy efficient materials—windows, insulation, heating systems, appliances, etc.—so that the homeowners will spend less on the cost of their utility bills," says Sarah Bird, executive director of MHFH. The Westbrook Foundation donation "will directly impact and fund the energy efficient measures we take to help protect our homeowners from energy poverty."

Westbrook Foundation Chair Paul Winch says supporting MHFH aligns perfectly with the Foundation's mission.

"As a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the wellbeing of the town's citizens, the Westbrook Foundation is always looking

for ways it can make a meaningful impact," says Winch. "When the Board members learned that Middlesex Habitat was planning a build here in town, finding a way to help immediately became a priority. We're so proud to be able

to support the efforts of this great organization, and specifically to support the effort to increase the number of affordable housing options in town."

Bird says MHFH hopes to break ground on the project this spring, depending on the weather. She anticipates a completion date near year's end, stating that Habitat builds typically require eight to ten months of volunteer labor.

"Westbrook is ready to roll up their sleeves and do whatever it takes to get this home built," says Bird. "The town is aware there is a lack of affordable homes, and I think this has helped tremendously and is the reason why the reception has been wonderful."

Bird says MHFH is particularly grateful for the support of the Westbrook Foundation, with its proven track record and decades-long reputation for helping effect positive change.

"The Westbrook Foundation is a well-respected organization and funder, and to have its support means our work is respected and identified as important for the community," she says.



Volunteers help Middlesex Habitat for Humanity on an area build. Photo courtesy of Sarah Bird

WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Catching up with two past recipients of Westbrook Foundation scholarships

LINDSEY RAMISTELLA TEDESCO, Westbrook High School Class of 2002



Current City: Norwalk, Connecticut

Undergraduate Degree: B.A. in Spanish from the University of Connecticut, 2006

Graduate Degree: J.D. with a focus in international law from Pace Law School, 2010

Current Position: Legal editor, privacy and data security, Thomson Reuters

Advice for students about to graduate from high school: Be fearless, confident in what you know, and humble about what you don't.

Q. What have you been up to since graduating from college?

I graduated from UCONN in 2006. Before attending Pace Law School in the fall of 2007, I took a year to travel in Chile and Argentina and worked at Westbrook High School as a resource room tutor and assistant softball coach.

After graduating law school, I moved to New York City for my first job as a prosecutor in Bronx County, where I worked on domestic violence cases and appellate cases. I served in a few more roles as a law enforcement agency attorney before switching to the private sector in 2017. I now work full-time from home in Connecticut, researching and writing about privacy and cybersecurity law for Thomson Reuters.

Q. What's one major challenge you've faced in your professional life, and how have you handled it?

I've found it difficult to find the courage to change directions professionally, even when I'm in a situation that no longer makes me happy. As my goals and priorities have changed over the years I've switched majors, switched schools, and switched jobs. I have learned to make peace with past decisions and figured out how to course-correct.

Q. How have your connections to Westbrook enriched your life?

My home friends are special because we've witnessed each other grow and evolve through our most formative and turbulent years. We still always have a great time when we get together even though our current day-to-day lives may be very different. Maintaining those bonds keeps open a window into different ways of life and keeps my mind open.

SEAMUS ASHBURNER, Westbrook High School Class of 2015

Current City: Westbrook, Connecticut

Undergraduate Degree: B.S. in mechanical engineering with a concentration in aerospace engineering, 2019

Current Position: Hydraulic systems engineer at Electric Boat

Advice for students about to graduate from high school:

Take advantage of every opportunity that they can. You never know when one connection, one skill, or anything along those lines will help you along down the road. Everything we do while we are young helps us develop into the people we are as adults. Every regret I have is about something I neglected to do, rather than anything I actually did. Finally, it is important to appreciate the Westbrook Foundation for the opportunities they provide for graduating high school seniors as it is incredibly important with how expensive college is nowadays.

Q. What have you been up to since graduating from college?

I've been working as an engineer at Electric Boat. My position works with hydraulic components for the current Virginia-class and future Columbia-class



submarines. I need to know how my components fit into each system as a whole and meet the extensive list of requirements that the Navy provides us. I work with vendors and have to oversee their activities, schedules, and

developments in order to ensure a quality product is installed on the boat. My goal for the immediate future is to pursue a graduate degree in some to-be-determined scientific and/or engineering field. In the distant future, I see myself in a management position overseeing larger-scale projects.

Q. Was there a moment when you realized your experience growing up in Westbrook was unique?

I realized the Westbrook experience was unique

when I arrived at school at UCONN and met new groups of friends who came from different schools around Connecticut. Many people I met went to high schools with classes of 300-plus students. These people occasionally met others at UCONN whom they went to high school with but never knew before college. At Westbrook, we know every single member of our class personally, as well as most people in the other classes throughout the school. This provides a unique experience because it gives you more of an opportunity to feel comfortable at school. It helps everyone feel included and everyone has a place to fit in.

Q. How have your connections to Westbrook enriched your life?

One Westbrook connection that has enriched my career was my friend and soccer teammate Matt Cyr. His father, Doug Cyr, was initially the man who hired me at Electric Boat, and he was the manager I worked under for the beginning of my job. He has since retired, but his connection was valuable and helped me kickstart my career.

In 2019, the Westbrook Foundation awarded a total of \$144,500 in scholarships to Westbrook residents pursuing higher education.