

Harvard Business School Club of Connecticut Community Partners

*Annual Report
2025*



September 2024 - August 2025



**Harvard
Business
School**

Club of Connecticut
Community Partners

Our Mission

Consulting
Brainstorming
Working Sessions
Case Method
Turbo Award
SPNM Award

Community Partner's (CP) mission is to enable HBS alumni to promote excellence in nonprofit leadership in CT through pro bono consulting, education, grant awards, and related initiatives that provide a rewarding opportunity to work together to benefit our community. We recognize that our success depends on the efforts and contributions of our volunteers. We want to express our appreciation to the 58 volunteers who helped to make 2025 another successful year.

Alumni Volunteers

Apply your business skills and career experience to help local nonprofits tackle their management challenges and opportunities.

Nonprofit Partners

Explore our advisory offerings, including several-month consulting projects and single brainstorming and case method sessions, tailored to your organization's needs.

From Our Leadership

As we reflect on 2025, we are struck by how much this year has been one of continued growth and renewal for HBS Community Partners of Connecticut (CP). This year also marked our 20th anniversary – two decades of HBS alumni strengthening Connecticut nonprofits – a milestone made possible by the dedication and talent of our extraordinary volunteers. Their expertise, energy, and generosity enabled us to expand the number and variety of projects we undertook, strengthen partnerships across the nonprofit sector, and build a strong foundation for the years ahead.

Throughout the year, our teams worked with organizations addressing critical community needs—education, housing, health, immigration, sustainability, and the arts. We guided leadership transitions, developed strategic plans, supported board development, and facilitated innovative brainstorming sessions and working groups.

From multi-month consulting engagements with Building One Community and Family & Children’s Agency to shorter, high-impact sessions with Clothes to Kids of Fairfield County and others, each project deepened our volunteers’ connection to Connecticut’s nonprofit ecosystem and to one another.

In 2025, we also welcomed nearly twenty new volunteers whose enthusiasm and expertise have already strengthened our work and broadened our reach. Their participation—alongside our experienced project leaders and board members—continues to ensure the vitality and future of our organization.

This year also marked the culmination of an 18-month strategic planning effort. Guided by extensive volunteer and client input, and shaped by thoughtful analysis and dialogue, this plan sets a clear direction for CP’s future. It reaffirms our dual mission of serving both the nonprofit sector and our HBS alumni community, and identifies key priorities – such as expanding volunteer engagement and deepening client partnerships – that will ensure our continued vitality and relevance.



cont.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on continuity and leadership development. We are:

- Engaging volunteers more deeply in both projects and governance to prepare the next generation of leaders;
- Deepening relationships with the nonprofits we serve to sustain impact beyond each engagement; and
- Prioritizing projects where our involvement can drive measurable community results.

To all who volunteered, sponsored, or partnered with us this year— thank you. Together, we continue to demonstrate the power of collaboration, generosity, and shared purpose in strengthening Connecticut’s nonprofit community. As we enter our third decade, we welcome your continued involvement in building the next chapter of CP’s impact and leadership. If you would like more information about us, please visit our [website](#).

Steven Phillips '83
Angela Piscitello, '95
Co-Chairs of the Board



Greater Bridgeport Symphony Society



DSABC Mentoring



**Harvard
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Community Partners**

Our Impact in 2025

20 Clients

Benefited from our pro bono consulting services.

58 VOLUNTEERS

Participated in pro bono consulting projects this year.

5,000 HOURS

Pro bono consulting and advisory services delivered annually

100% CLIENTS

Report Projects had impact with 82% reporting Significant and Highly Significant Impact

100% CLIENTS

Would recommend CP to a friend.

"It was a pleasure meeting fellow alumni of all ages and working together to add tremendous value to a local nonprofit. I would highly recommend HBS CPI!"

HBS Alum

"This brainstorming session was very rewarding to me as a volunteer -- the preparatory material was useful, and enabled me to contribute substantively to the session."

HBS Alum

Since

2004

\$36.4 million

Dollar value of pro bono consulting services provided by HBS alumni to Connecticut nonprofits.

300+

Number of HBS alumni in Connecticut who have volunteered for consulting projects.

200+

Number of Connecticut nonprofits who have benefited from HBS Community Partners consulting services.

43

Turbo Awards and scholarships awarded to Connecticut nonprofit leaders to attend the Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management (SPNM) executive education program.

Consulting

The demand for CP traditional consulting services throughout CT continued to be strong: we completed 15 consulting projects. Clients included agencies focused on empowering those in need with nutrition, housing, mental health, immigration, and self-sufficiency; providing crisis and supportive services for victims of domestic violence; preserving endangered species; and delivering fresh meat, vegetables, bread, canned goods, and boxed foods to food pantries. 2026 begins with 7 projects either underway or about to begin.



Founded in 2023, the AMRW is an alliance of nonprofit organizations, towns, tribal nations, and individuals dedicated to preserving Connecticut's Mystic River watershed. AMRW seeks to keep all those in the watershed area safe and flourishing during this period of intensifying climate change by expanding citizen participation in decision-making and stewardship.

A key long-term goal of AMRW is to prepare a Resiliency Plan. This major undertaking involves significant data gathering, ecological health planning, and a climate residence plan. To guide Plan preparation, HBSCP was asked to advise on the development of an effective and stable organization, financially sustainable with strong community support, including youth involvement.

The HBSCP team conducted numerous interviews with Alliance members, leaders of watershed alliances elsewhere, and community members to understand differing points of view. With client leadership, the team translated AMRW goals into initiatives with goals, benchmarks, and specific time-phased intervals. These formed the basis for periodic on-going meetings to track progress, identify and address areas of concern. Said the client, *"... the research you did for us, and the feedback you gleaned, was essential. Your rubrics and guides for structuring our strategic plan and for decision-making about programs expanded our capacity and professionalism. Thank you, Community Partners!!"*

Project Leaders: Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteers: Devon Branch, John Dexheimer, Shruti Ganapathy



Membership in At Home in Darien (AHID) is free and automatic to residents at least 60 years old. The organization's mission is to help seniors live independently, with dignity and comfort in their own homes. Through its major service, AHID has provided thousands of rides for seniors each year, predominantly for medical appointments.

AHID leadership asked for support in crafting a new strategic plan. Community Partners (CP) collaborated with the board and applied the balanced scorecard framework to develop an updated plan focused on exploring potential new services and additional resources. The incoming Board Chair and ED embraced the plan and is implementing the major recommendations. Additionally, one of the CP volunteers, a Darien resident, has been invited and now belongs to the AHID Board of Directors.

Project Leaders: Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteers: Lindsay Barth, Stefanie McDermott





The Center for Immigrant Opportunity

Building One Community (B1C) is a Stamford-based nonprofit that empowers immigrants through programs in English Language Learning, Workforce Development, Immigration Legal Services, and Family Support. With demand for services surging amid shifting demographics and policy changes, B1C partnered with Community Partners to develop a strategic plan to guide the organization through a leadership transition and an increasingly complex future.

The planning process, conducted amid an uncertain and potentially volatile immigration policy environment and evolving local needs, emphasized flexibility, continuity, and adaptability. Rather than focusing on static goals, the resulting plan equips B1C to respond to shifting conditions with resilience—aligning programs with emerging needs, sustaining trust through timely and accurate information, ensuring sustainable sources of funding, and maintaining operational agility. Strategic priorities included strengthening infrastructure, investing in leadership and technology, and expanding B1C's role as a reliable hub for services and advocacy.

The 2025–2027 Strategic Plan is built around ten Strategic Pillars, grouped into three core areas: Programmatic Focus, Community Connection & Responsiveness, and Enablers of Mission Success. It positions B1C to remain a trusted partner for immigrant families and a resilient force for inclusion and equity in Fairfield County.

Project Leader: Steve Phillips

Volunteers: Bob Boxwell, Russ Chapman, Rodgers Harper, Karen Krause, Antonio Mazzara





English Language Support Services (ELSS) leverages its extensive contacts and relationships among language teachers and school systems to bring language learning to many of the least equipped students in numerous Fairfield County public schools. It succeeds largely through small group classes and personal attention.

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Management approached Community Partners for help in developing a 3–5 year strategic plan to ensure its sustainability. The project focused on the basics for achieving success and growing services provided by leveraging the skills and experience of key board members. At the conclusion, the Executive Director reported that ELSS was “*much better off, we now have a roadmap to follow.*”

Project Leaders: Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteers: Dan Clare, Jim Locker, Amy Lipper
McCauley



The Children's Community Development Center (CCDC) is a highly respected educational daycare center located in Westport, Connecticut. For over 44 years, it has provided year-round care and early childhood education to more than 60 children annually, from infancy through age six. CCDC maintains a strong reputation and consistently full enrollment.

After 41 years of dedicated leadership, longtime Director Eileen Ward announced her plans to retire and asked HBSCP for support in planning for her succession. The HBSCP team, which included 2 first-time volunteers, was tasked with validating the school's current strategic direction, defining future leadership needs, outlining the qualifications for a new Director, and guiding the school's succession task force through the development of a job description and search process.

To inform their work, the team conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 25 stakeholders, including board members, faculty, parents, alumni, donors, educators, and community leaders. Based on these insights, they presented a set of findings and actionable recommendations and then collaborated closely with the task force to finalize both the job description and a thoughtful, mission-aligned search process.

The result was a smooth and successful transition to a new Director. Reflecting on the experience, the client shared: “*I cannot imagine a better experience. It felt as if the CP team was as invested in the success of our project and our organization as we are. They were engaged, involved, and professional. They identified the strengths of our organization and helped us set a path forward that builds on those strengths. We feel so fortunate to have benefited from their expertise, thoughtfulness, and commitment.*”

Project Leaders: Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteers: Rabia Saeed, Catherine Vodola



The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement's mission is to create safer and more loving communities through social, emotional, and character development programs. It is inspired by the courage and compassion of Jesse Lewis, one of the children murdered in the Sandy Hook, Connecticut, tragedy of December 2012. Choose Love programs focus on a social and emotional learning curriculum developed for secondary schools and provide professional development sessions and coaching for teachers, school counselors, and other education professionals. They have also developed a program for prisons.

Choose Love programs have a demonstrated track record of success and have won numerous awards from AARP, Bloomberg Business Week, the NY Times DealBook Summit, and others.

Community Partners was initially asked to help Choose Love determine how best to measure the success of their program in schools. After early information gathering and discussion, Choose Love and Community Partners modified the focus of the work to address how they could expand, more rapidly and effectively, the number of schools and students benefiting from the program. Working together, the team developed a program expansion plan, including prioritized target geographic areas and schools, marketing messages, skill and resource requirements for implementation, and key measures of progress.

Choose Love is now working with its major funders to add the resources and skills required for a successful rollout of the expansion plan.

Project Leaders: Charley Beever, Lindsay Paul
Volunteers: John Dexheimer, Shruti Ganapathy





Empowered Network works with survivors of human trafficking to assist them in transitioning to productive employment. They are part of the Thrive Collaborative, which is focused on designing and implementing an innovative and efficient ecosystem that connects trafficking survivors with interested employers and supports the employment process.

Community Partners (CP) helped Empowered Network and the Thrive Collaborative in understanding the perspectives and needs of employers and the corporate community regarding employment opportunities for trafficking survivors. The CP team addressed several key issues, including identifying job categories that align well with employer needs and survivor skills, areas with a high number of available positions, and sectors where employers struggle to fill open roles. Community Partners also helped determine the necessary credentials for qualifying for these positions, as well as compensation ranges and opportunities for advancement.

For job categories and employers that offer appealing opportunities for trafficking survivors, Community Partners found the most effective ways for the Thrive Collaborative to engage with employer hiring processes and systems.

Empowered Network and the Thrive Collaborative are utilizing the findings from Community Partners as they design and develop the ecosystem that connects trafficking survivors with high-potential employers.

Project Leader: Charley Beever
Volunteers: Doreen Collins, Erv Shames,
Jaime Smith

A five-member Community Partners team joined members of the Darien Community Association (DCA) to chart a four-year (FY 26-29) roadmap for its 90-year-old Thrift Shop, which underwrites over half of DCA's budget. During a three-month engagement, the volunteers conducted in-depth interviews with dozens of board, staff, and community stakeholders, field-tested ideas with 442 shoppers and donors, mined five years of POS data, and benchmarked leading thrift operations statewide.

The final board-approved plan, delivered July 1, 2025, weaves five mutually reinforcing pillars—inventory discipline, revenue growth, mission visibility, operational excellence, and tighter DCA integration—into a crawl-walk-run timeline supported by KPI dashboards and quick-win checklists.

If fully executed, the roadmap is projected to increase the shop's net contribution by 18% and divert approximately 100 tons of goods from landfills each year. This effort will ensure that every donated item and shopper dollar maximizes its impact on scholarships, community programs, and environmental sustainability in Darien.

Project Leaders: Angela Piscitello
Volunteers: Kristine Augenthaler, Brendan Biggins,
Dana Correale, Stefanie McDermott, Ann Rogers





Post 53, a Darien-based nonprofit, is unique in the US: it has provided emergency medical services at the highest possible level to the town for over 50 years using Darien High School students and adult volunteers. The students, who must pass the same demanding state-mandated training courses as the adults, provide pre-hospital care and drive the ambulance transporting patients to local hospitals. Students (and adult) volunteers commit to regular on-call shifts at the Post 53 HQ to ensure 24/7 coverage in addition to weekly training and organizational meetings.

Community Partners was asked to help draft a strategic plan involving several challenges: increased demand for medical services due to the new downtown Darien development, updated student rules in view of changing community values and commitments, new annual budgets, consistent guidelines for capital expenditures, greater awareness to increase development, and prioritization of technology, building, and equipment investments.

In view of the unique student-driven culture, students were included in the quadrant teams to develop implementation strategies and act as spokespeople for each team, reporting back to the board. To date, approximately half of the 35 recommendations have been or are about to be implemented, and progress has been made on all.

Project Leader: Andrew Traub

Project Team: Christine Auh, Doreen Collins, Rodgers Harper, Tom Heckel, Tom Mullaney, Jackie Scott, Erv Shames, Jaime Smith



In May 2025, the HBS Community Partners project team completed its second engagement with a municipal agency, the Greenwich Department for Human Services (GDHS). This department supports Greenwich residents, especially those in need, by coordinating services, assisting with application processes, facilitating referrals, collaborating with community partners, and managing support from the Greenwich Department of Human Services Fund, Inc.

The CP-GDHS team developed a three-year strategic plan for future operations using a Balanced Scorecard approach, which included extensive internal and external interviews. The final plan focused on four key pillars: Enhanced Services, Increased Accessibility, Optimized Resources, and Leveraging Technology for greater efficiency and improved service delivery. The project team delivered the draft of the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan in May 2025, and it was approved in August.



Given that GDHS is a municipal agency, the project team recognized areas in which it differs from traditional nonprofit clients. Although there are structural and contextual differences—particularly in governance, budgeting, staffing, and public accountability—the consulting framework used by HBS Community Partners was effectively adapted for this setting.

The HBS CPCT team received positive feedback from Board Chair Patty Roberts, and we look forward to updates on the implementation: *"On behalf of myself, the Board, and especially Demetria, I want to express our sincere gratitude for your invaluable expertise and guidance throughout the development of the Greenwich Department of Human Services' Strategic Plan 2026-2028. Your insights and contributions were instrumental in shaping a comprehensive and forward-thinking plan that we believe will benefit our community for years to come. We are extremely grateful for your dedication, commitment, and partnership on this important project."*

Project Leaders: Lindsay Barth, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteers: John Petsagourakis, Buzz Thorman





Family and Children's Agency is one of the largest social services organizations in Norwalk. For more than 80 years, Family & Children's Agency (FCA) has been helping individuals and families throughout Fairfield County and beyond to realize life's possibilities. FCA increases the social and emotional well-being of its clients by providing strength-based, solution-focused services for every stage of life.

FFCA requested Community Partners' (CP) assistance in constructing their '25-'27 Strategic Plan. FCA wanted CP to give a new, outside perspective on the Strategic Plan, its development, and implementation. They particularly wanted help in establishing milestones, metrics, measurable goals, and implementation responsibilities.

The completed Plan focuses on five areas that leverage FCA's strengths and address its emerging challenges. Each area of focus has measurable outcomes. The FCA Board unanimously approved the Plan and believes that FCA is poised to deliver impactful services that improve the lives of its clients and strengthen its community.

Project Leaders: David Grasfield, Erv Shames
Volunteer: Angela Piscitello



Community Fund of Darien (TCF), established in 1951, provides funds of \$600-800K to social service nonprofits in Stamford, Norwalk, and Darien for a variety of purposes while managing several community programs in Darien. TCF asked Community Partners to assist with a three-year strategic plan to focus on improving its ability to increase its community grants and to provide a contribution analysis of the local programs.

Recommendations from CP included: the need to define a three year financial goal to act as a north star to guide all operations; for the board to more greatly engage in fund raising; the need to better identify and reward key donors; new software with superior analytics and tracking capabilities; improved marketing by targeting newly arrived residents and corporations; the use of video for success stories from its grantees to appear on the home page. With all of these changes, CP believed that TCF could increase its community grants substantially.

The Community Fund of Darien has embraced the recommended financial goal and is transitioning to Bloomerang as its new CRM. *"To engage the board more fully, we have defined five areas of growth from our Strategic Plan and grouped each board member to work on one area - Marketing, Governance, Finance, Programs, and Development. At our September board meeting, each subgroup presented its goals and timelines. In our October board meeting, we will discuss and implement a revised "Elevator Pitch" from HBS CP's suggestions."*

Project Leader: Andrew Traub
Volunteers: Jay Bennett, Brendan Biggins, Tom Heckel, Laura Ruhe, Curt Solsvig



The Danbury Student & Business Connection (DSABC) is a 36-year-old organization that was established as an in-school mentoring program for K-12 students, staffed by volunteers from local corporations and businesses. Over the years, the program has expanded to provide college scholarships, internship opportunities, and a program called Foundations for Your Future, which introduces students to college and trade school options, as well as organizing field trips to higher education institutions. Recently, however, the program shifted from being integrated within the schools to a simple Technical Service Provider contract in September 2025. This transition has placed additional pressure on the board to achieve greater independence and self-sustainability.

To address these challenges, DSABC sought collaboration with HBSCP to develop a three-year strategic plan. The focus of this plan includes transitioning to an effective and efficient Technical Service Provider, rebuilding the mentorship program that was affected by the decline of mentors during and after COVID-19, preparing for the loss of two active, long-term board members, and establishing metrics to evaluate the organization's performance. The team conducted interviews with key stakeholders, analyzed survey data, and researched comparable organizations.

Together, DSABC and HBSCP created a strategic plan that prioritizes initiatives, responsibilities, and targets. DSABC also worked with the Danbury Public Schools to establish practical metrics and a data collection process. The board has approved the strategic plan, and implementation is progressing rapidly.

Project Leaders: Tom Mullaney, Many-Jane Wood
Volunteers: Akshay Mittel, Andrew Traub



The Greater Bridgeport Symphony Society (GBS) is now in its 80th season. GBS has a tradition of musical excellence and recently recruited a new music director. GBS generally performs five concerts per season at the Klein Auditorium and offers educational programs to selected area schools and youth groups.

While GBS has maintained a steady subscriber base, like other arts non-profits, it faces challenges, including an aging donor base, increasing costs, and board governance engagement. HBSCP was tasked with crafting a three-year strategic plan.

The HBSCP team conducted numerous interviews with board members, leaders of other CT orchestras, and community leaders, as well as a thorough analysis of financial and audience trends. Our recommendations were divided into two parts: 1) strategies and tactics to address immediate 6-12 months, and 2) longer-term aspirations.

Said the President, *"Community Partners has been a shot in the arm to our organization. They got down in the trenches with our Board, researched our finances, and reported back the unvarnished truth of our situation. The experience has been both frightening and affirming. Each team member was engaged and provided diverse and valuable perspectives. After working with Community Partners, I look to our future with renewed vigor."*

Project Leaders: Jeff Krulwich, Glenn Reicin
Volunteers: Phil Goodhart, Carrie Hammond





The Junior League of Greenwich (JLG) is a women's volunteer organization dedicated to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Founded in 1959, JLG has a rich history of making a positive impact in Greenwich, Connecticut, through various community projects and initiatives.

JLG asked the Harvard Business School of CT Community Partners to help develop a three-year strategic plan. The HBS-CP team conducted interviews and other vital research before leading three workshops with JLG leadership to address the key pillars of focus for JLG going forward, including financial sustainability, right-sized and engaged membership, and maximizing the community impact of JLG. Once the key goals and objectives were set and approved by JLG members, HBS-CP conducted an additional workshop for each pillar to detail the annual plans for 2025-2028.

The work of the Community Partners team was well-received with compliments from President Stacey Higdon:

"We wanted to thank you for all your time helping us with our Strategic Plan! We could not have done it without you, and your guidance and participation were vital to our success. I appreciate all your time, energy, and support. We enjoyed working with you!"

Project Leaders: Lindsay Barth, Jeff Krulwich
Volunteer: Sonia Alcantarilla



Brainstorming

Brainstorming sessions are ninety minutes long and designed to address a tactical challenge. Two agencies requested brainstorming sessions in 2025.



Clothes to Kids Fairfield County's (CTKF) mission is to provide new and quality used clothing to low-income children in Fairfield County, free of charge. They operate in a boutique retail environment, offering high-quality service to help build children's confidence and self-esteem, essential for achieving academic success. CTKF provides over 500 children with full wardrobes twice each year. With a dramatically increased budget of \$70,000, CTKF is now distributing new footwear to all eligible shoppers.

The Community Partners team met with Elaine Rubinson, founder, for a brainstorming discussion over 90 minutes to address her question: "What should I do first? What do I need to do or begin to do over the next 3 months?"

The team discussed the operations, growth potential, and strategic direction, with a focus on building a better board and expanding their services. They also explored strategies for improving the organization's impact and visibility, including leveraging partnerships, conducting surveys, and utilizing storytelling.

Recommendations included focusing less on operational issues and more on strategic ones by hiring a day-to-day manager, allowing the founder to concentrate on strengthening the board and strategizing for longer-term goals. As a result, Elaine has found the time to develop a strategic plan for CTK and to strengthen the board.

Team Leaders: Jeff Krulwich, Andrew Traub
Volunteers: Craig Matthews, Akshay Mittal, Jaime Smith, Buzz Thorman, Scott Weiner





St. Catherine Academy (Fairfield, CT) is a state-approved special-education day school serving students ages 5–22 with moderate-to-severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. With a ~3:1 staffing model, integrated therapies, and a continuum of support into an on-site Adult Day Program, the Academy engaged HBS Community Partners of CT to support a near-term enrollment push—targeting five additional students for Fall 2025.

Community Partners facilitated a 90-minute virtual brainstorming session on June 20, 2025. Using a structured flow (briefing, tactic walk-through, live-poll ranking, and action design), the team prioritized quick wins and assigned owners, first steps, and simple 30-day metrics to increase qualified inquiries and tours.

The engagement delivered a concise Quick-Win Action Pack: a one-page Priority Snapshot and plug-and-play assets (parish-bulletin blurb, forwardable family referral email/flyer, social posts, an outreach email to special-education directors, a lunch-and-learn deck outline, and a one-page fact sheet). Top tactics focus on engaging the Catholic parish network, activating community word-of-mouth, boosting website/SEO and social presence, and targeted outreach to districts and clinicians; early steps included updating the website, creating a parent placement guide, and launching targeted communications.

Project Leader: Doreen Collins.

Volunteers: Charley Beever, Brendan Biggins, Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich, Angela Piscitello, Buzz Thorman, Mary Jane Wood



Working Sessions

In 2025, we held working sessions for three clients seeking to build board consensus on strategic issues, answer strategic questions on growth, identify how best to support and serve members and residents; and develop strategic plans.



Intempo is a Stamford, CT-based youth-development organization that provides high-quality classical and intercultural music education to children predominantly from immigrant backgrounds and from communities underrepresented in the arts. INTEMPO is committed to connecting the dots between intercultural music education and its influence on the overall development of children.

Intempo requested that CP facilitate a board retreat for half a day to address their current issues that included ensuring a smooth transition of a new CEO hired after the departure of the highly charismatic founder, reviewing board duties and responsibilities with a board of young professionals who had no prior board experience, and strengthening the Board's understanding of the organization through a SWOT exercise, which generated dynamic Board discussions and interactions.

Erv Shames led a discussion on the responsibilities of board members, including fiscal responsibilities, development, strategic planning, overseeing the CEO, and representing the organization. Andrew Traub worked with the board to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Topics included, "What is success and how should it be defined?"

The retreat was, according to the client, "*a huge success*" in that it defined a direction and tone for the work to be done in 2025 by educating the new board members, setting priorities, and building relationships.

Board facilitators: Erv Shames and Andrew Traub



The Center for Family Justice

Center for Family Justice (CFJ), a Connecticut-based multidisciplinary organization, is deeply committed to helping the victims of domestic violence. With a history that spans over 125 years, CFJ, formerly known as the YWCA of Bridgeport, provides a range of crisis and supportive services in Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull. These services, including a crisis hotline, advocacy, transitional housing, and civil and legal services, are made possible by the dedicated Board and staff. CFJ sought the expertise of HBS CP to assist the incoming Board Chair in the board development process, to define the roles and responsibilities of the Board and foster a highly engaged and effective board, which is crucial for the organization's effectiveness.

The Community Partners team, in a collaborative effort with board members, interviewed board leaders and key senior staff to gather diverse perspectives on the role and needs of the Board. This collective insight was instrumental in the development of an organization-specific board training workshop, which was then facilitated with the full Board.

The GFJ board was very grateful for guiding the training of new board members and for reviewing board ethics, *"your expertise, professionalism, and support are like no other, and we truly appreciate all you've done to support us at The Center for Family Justice."*

Board facilitators: Rodgers Harper, Jeff Krulwich, Mary-Jane Wood



Case Method



In June 2025, HBS Community Partners (HBSCP) completed its second successful pilot of a new consulting format inspired by the Harvard Business School case method. This approach mirrors the dynamic classroom discussions at the heart of HBS pedagogy and continues to prove its value for both alumni participants and nonprofit clients.

As with our first test in 2024, the HBSCP team distributed an 8-page case document outlining a real-world management challenge. Alumni volunteers submitted individual recommendations (1–3 pages) for the client and participated in a 90-minute Zoom "classroom" discussion moderated by the project team. Following the session, the client received all individual write-ups, a full video recording of the discussion, and a summary recap from the team.

The client was the [Andrew Shaw Memorial Trust \(ASMT\)](#), which oversees scouting in Darien, Connecticut. In the face of nationwide declines in scouting participation, ASMT sought strategic guidance tailored to its local context. Four HBSCP team members created the case materials, and an additional 14 alumni joined the project to submit written recommendations and participate in the Zoom session.

The group offered a wide range of insights and strategies. While perspectives varied, a strong consensus emerged: Darien scouting can be revitalized through improved marketing, clearer messaging, and new program formats that better reflect today's youth interests and family dynamics.

Feedback from both alumni and the client has been overwhelmingly positive. Many participants—including those who had also joined the 2024 pilot—rated the experience highly and expressed enthusiasm for future case method projects.

The client's reaction captured the spirit and success of the effort:

"I can only say WOW! I just finished watching the video. It is extraordinarily rich in content and perspectives. There is much to digest... There is no real way to thank you and your team for the extraordinary value you've provided—so many insightful thoughts, concrete ideas, actionable recommendations. The video is both instructive and a persuasive tool for change. You're right: the case study method yielded a rich funnel of ideas. Thank you!"

Building on this momentum, HBS Community Partners plans to expand the use of this model in future engagements—and anticipates other CP groups will explore its potential.

Project Leaders: Lindsay Barth, Jeff Kulwich, Jim Locker, Buzz Thorman

Volunteers: Chuck Barton, John Dexheimer, Tom Emmons, Ted Gutelius, Chris Healy, Richard Kane, Vytan Kisielius, Craig Matthews, Stefanie McDermott, William Muerer, Vivek Ravishanker, Glenn Reicin, Rabia Saeed, Jamie Smith

Awards

Lee Barnes Memorial Scholarship for Nonprofit Leaders

For 20 years, CP has invited applications and granted scholarships to one or more CT nonprofit leaders to attend the Harvard Business School's Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management (SPNM) executive education program. This Executive Education course is an HBS Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI) program that allows senior executives to examine their missions and develop strategies for the new global economy. It is an intensive six-day program taught by the HBS faculty. Over 150 nonprofit leaders worldwide, representing a wide range of nonprofit sectors, make up the student body. Over 27 of our state's recognized best nonprofit leaders have attended this program and unanimously report that SPNM was the most "outstanding executive education experience of their entire careers." This year we launched a bi-monthly roundtable where past SPNM attendees reconnect, exchange ideas, and share both challenges and best-practice solutions.

The 2025 Lee Barnes Memorial Scholarship for Nonprofit Leaders Recipients were Ilaria Filippi, LMFT, Executive Director of Clifford Beers Community Care Center in New Haven, and Monica Maccera Filipu, CEO of the Children's Learning Center.

The Clifford Beers Community Care Center is a nationally recognized provider of trauma-informed mental health care for children, adolescents, and adults. They serve as the safety net for children and families in the greater New Haven area who cannot afford or gain access to private mental health care. The whole-family, trauma-informed, integrated model of care is designed to reduce chronic stress and build healthy and supportive connections.



Children's Learning Centers of Fairfield County (CLC) is committed to providing early childhood education for all families, with direct services and programs focused on health, nutrition & family support for children 6 weeks to 5 years of age. As the second largest early childhood education provider in Connecticut, CLC has been a leader in developing and implementing high-quality and affordable early childhood education and care programs since 1902. The nonprofit agency is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and has eight locations in Stamford.

HBS Community Partners plans to invite scholarship applications for the 2026 SPNM program in February. Please direct your questions to our Awards Committee awards@hbscpconnecticut.org.

Robert Whitby Turbo Award

The Robert Whitby Turbo Award was granted with the generous support of our lead sponsor DR Bank. The Turbo Award aims to catalyze or “turbocharge” a local nonprofit by launching a new initiative or improving an existing program. It is open to all Connecticut nonprofits.

We are thrilled to announce **Generation S.O.S.** as the winner of the 2024 Robert Whitby Turbo Award. This award helped S.O.S. create the Video Library Program featuring teen and young adult speakers of all socioeconomic backgrounds from across the country, sharing their stories about how they struggled with and overcame their challenges with mental health, social pressures, and substance abuse.

Congratulations also go to the **Fairfield Museum and History Center**, our runner-up, which will receive a special recognition prize for its inspiring contributions to preserving and sharing local history. This award helped Fairfield Museum and History Center’s new program to provide free hands-on educational field trips for Bridgeport students in grades 6-8.

DR Bank is a Connecticut state-chartered and FDIC member bank that offers a comprehensive suite of products and services, including fintech sponsor banking, commercial lending, commercial cash management, and digital banking throughout the region.

Thank you!



Support Community Partners' Mission

to serve Connecticut nonprofits through pro bono consulting services, scholarships for nonprofits to attend HBS programs, and grants to “turbocharge” local nonprofits.

- Donations are tax-deductible as charitable contributions.
- Businesses can gain brand awareness with Harvard Business School alums and area nonprofits.
- Please visit our [website](#) to support Community Partners.

Testimonials

"We are all deeply grateful for the "above and beyond" commitment of the entire HBS Community partners team as we navigated both internal changes and external challenges, including change in leadership that would directly impact our strategic goals. As I reviewed the plan summary, the depth and breadth of our strategic journey since we began last fall was striking. With everything we faced, and continue to face, it would have been easy to get stuck in the present. You all helped us to see beyond the immediate challenges and thoughtfully develop a plan that is truly strategic."

Mary Sommer, Board Chair
Building One Community

"THANK YOU BOTH for all your work on the Retreat. The feedback has been incredibly positive and very supportive. I think we moved the Board ahead significantly, and we will be working far better -- more effectively -- because of the work we did yesterday. Your planning and personal involvement made all the difference in helping our Board to get to know/trust each other so we can concentrate on the issues we need to address in the coming year, and I feel eternally grateful to you for helping to make this happen. Thank you!"

Nancy Gramps, Board Co-Chair
Intempo

The Club of CT Community Partners has dedicated time and energy to help support Future 5 strengthen our work. We have been able to identify clear goals and are on a path to developing an even stronger and more dynamic Future 5 than ever before thanks to your help. Thank you for your dedication to Future 5 and our community.

Amanda Dubois-Mwake, Executive Director
Future 5

"Not only did you give us a plan and path forward, you energized our board to reach out and we have 5 new members joining in April.

Gaby Rattner,
Chief Development Officer
Barbara's House

Volunteer Spotlight



Shruti Ganapathy PLDA 36

I consider myself a serial volunteer. It's a great icebreaker because it's usually followed by a "what does that mean?" It was right after I gained my Alumni Status from HBS that an email among the hordes of new ones telling us about everything that's available to us with this new shiny status, caught my attention - one seeking volunteers for the HBS Club of CT Community Partners.

I have to confess that at that point in time, I had a fair amount of volunteering experience. I had served on the Boards of a couple of non-profits, and had held some advisory positions with governmental agencies. But none of it had been in Connecticut. Giving back was an integral part of my value system. And as the popular saying goes, "Charity begins at home."

Volunteering with HBSCT Community Partners has been an immensely satisfying experience. I have been able to learn as much from interacting with the stalwarts as I believe I have been able to contribute to a better and more impactful society, in my own small way.

If I had to take a moment to think about what impacted me most in this first year of volunteering with HBSCT Community Partners, I would have to say meeting and networking with HBS Alumni in a way that is more meaningful than evening mixers. I have had the opportunity to learn from my predecessors, understand cultures, nuances, and traditions, and have been provided with a non-judgmental environment to continue honing my business skills.

There is a lot you take away when you volunteer your time within your community. And I have HBS CT Community Partners to thank for that.

Tom Mullaney '80

It was a pleasure this past year to help two marvelous non-profit organizations develop new strategic plans - Post 53 High School Student Volunteer Ambulance Service in Darien and the Danbury Student And Business Connection (DSABC).

I was impressed with how the Community Partners team worked so intelligently and collaboratively with both non-profits. And the client members saw that and really appreciated it: they were getting McKinsey-level advice and counsel for free and literally soaked up all the ideas and initiatives. It was such a great feeling for the Community Partners teams and for the clients.

I would strongly, strongly recommend to my fellow alumni to reach out to one of the Board members of Community Partners and come give us a try! You will have fun, meet many interesting new people, and give back in a way that will make you feel good and will reflect so well on Harvard Business School.

My thanks to all my teammates on these projects and I will look forward to working with you again!



Stephanie McDermott '20

I joined Community Partners in 2024 to stay connected with the HBS alumni community. Over the past year, I have not only built meaningful relationships with fellow alumni but also developed a deeper connection with local nonprofits.

Most of the projects I have worked on through Community Partners have involved nonprofits right in my backyard in Darien, Connecticut. In my work with At Home in Darien, our team developed a new strategic plan for an organization focused on empowering seniors in the community—a mission that resonated deeply with me, given my experience as a caregiver to elderly parents. For the Darien Community Association, we supported a multi-year strategy to strengthen its thrift shop operations and elevate the work of an organization that promotes community, sustainability, and lifelong learning. Working on these initiatives has deepened my appreciation for the vibrant volunteer culture in my town and introduced me to inspiring nonprofit leaders who are making a meaningful impact across Connecticut.

Working with Community Partners has been an impactful experience for me. My project teams have been generous with their time and knowledge, not only in building strategic consulting skills, but also in sharing everything from professional advice to hobbies like needlepoint. Through these connections, I have formed lasting friendships and valuable professional relationships. I look forward to new projects in the coming year and to finding new ways to engage with the Community Partners team.



Rabia Saeed '07

Having stepped out of the workforce to raise my kids, I had always told myself I would try and find a way to start using my brain again once my littlest started Kindergarten. So, it was truly fortuitous timing when I received an email from Jeff Krulwich in July of '24, two months before my son was entering K. Jeff was looking to recruit volunteers for several projects that the HBS CP team was involved with at the time. One of them (working with CDC, a preschool in Westport to help recruit their next leader) resonated with me on several levels - my son had attended preschool in the same complex as CDC, and I loved the idea of working on something close to home. I thoroughly enjoyed the work we did for them and loved working with the CP team led by Jeff and Rodgers as well as the team at CDC. Using my brain again was as thrilling as I had imagined it would be!

Much as I wanted to engage in another project immediately, I had a health issue come up that took me offline for a few months. Once I was able to engage again, Jeff reached out about a project CP was working on with the Darien Boy Scouts. This project was set up as a case study write-up / group discussion. It was great to engage with other alums and brainstorm ideas for the organization in this format.

One of the most gratifying things about the work CP does is that you truly feel that you are helping an organization, and that the work you do directly benefits them. I've also been lucky thus far in that the teams I worked with have been lovely. I'm excited to keep working with CP on other projects in the upcoming year!



CP Salutes Our 2025 HBS & Volunteers

Sonia Alcantarilla '01
Kristine Augenthaler '98
Christine Auh '08
Lindsay Barth '07 *
Chuck Barton '75
Jay Bennett '85
Charley Beever '78 *
Brendan Biggins '02 *
Mendi Blue-Paca '09 *
Devon Branch '16
Bob Boxwell '88
Russ Chapman '75
Dan Clare '99
Roger Cole '85 *
Doreen Collins '85 *
Dana Correale '08
John Dexheimer '80
Tom Emmons '75
Shruti Ganapathy PLDA 36
Phil Goodhart '86

David Grasfield '93
Ted Gutelius '73
Carrie Hammond '92
Rodgers Harper '71 *
Chris Healey '23
Tom Heckel '77
Richard Kane '68
Amit Kapoor GMP 33
Vytas Kisielius '82
Karen Krause '03
Jeff Krulwich '67 *
Jim Locker '72
Craig Matthews '17
Antonio Mazzara TGMP 15 *
Amy Lipper McCauley OPM 15
Stefanie McDermott '20 *
Akshay Mittal '04
William Meurer '90
Tom Mullaney '80 *

Lindsay Paul '85
John Petsagourakis '19
Steve Phillips '83 *
Angela Piscitello '95 *
Pranay Ranjan '19 *
Vivek Ravishanker '12
Glenn Reicin '90
Ann Rogers '85
James Rulmyr '78 *
Rabia Saeed '07
Jackie Scott '86
Erv Shames '66 *
Jaime Smith '98
Curt Solsvig '81
Walter "Buzz" Thorman '83 *
Andrew Traub '78 *
Catherine Vodola '04
Scott Weiner AMP 193
Mary-Jane Wood '91 *

*Board Member



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