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Contact: Sue Murphy
Liberty Bank Foundation
(860) 638-2959

TWO WILLIMANTIC NONPROFITS WIN GRANT CONTEST

Willimantic, CT— Two Willimantic nonprofits, the Windham Regional Community Council and the Windham Regional No Freeze Hospitality Center, Inc., were among the three winners of Liberty Bank Foundation’s 20th Anniversary Grant competition. Each will receive a grant of \$20,000 to fund expanded operations. The winners of the competition were announced at a special conference and celebration held by the Liberty Bank Foundation at St. Clements Castle on October 3; the 200 attendees included bank and foundation officials, foundation grantees, and other philanthropic funders.

“It’s not very often that we have the pleasure of making grants of this size,” said Liberty Bank President & CEO Chandler J. Howard. “Given the milestone in our history, we wanted to do something special for the communities we serve.”

The Windham Regional Community Council will apply the grant to its Windham Youth CORE, GROW Windham’s award-winning high-school workforce and leadership development program. Funding will transform the program from one that serves youth to one that is youth-led, offering participants steady employment and opportunities to grow into positions of increased responsibility and independence.

“The youth in our program are so excited to start building their Community Academy, which will give them opportunities to develop career skills, teach their peers, and build their community at the same time,” said Sally Milius, director of GROW Windham. “The Liberty Bank Foundation really stands out as a partner and advocate for our communities, and we’re grateful for their ongoing support.”

The Windham Regional No Freeze Hospitality Center will use the grant to form the Northeast Youth Engagement Team, a group of young people who will be trained to engage and provide information for homeless youth ages 18 to 24. The team’s goal is to help homeless youth to connect or reconnect with families or services to gain access to stable housing. This regional effort is part of a statewide initiative to end youth and family homelessness by 2020.

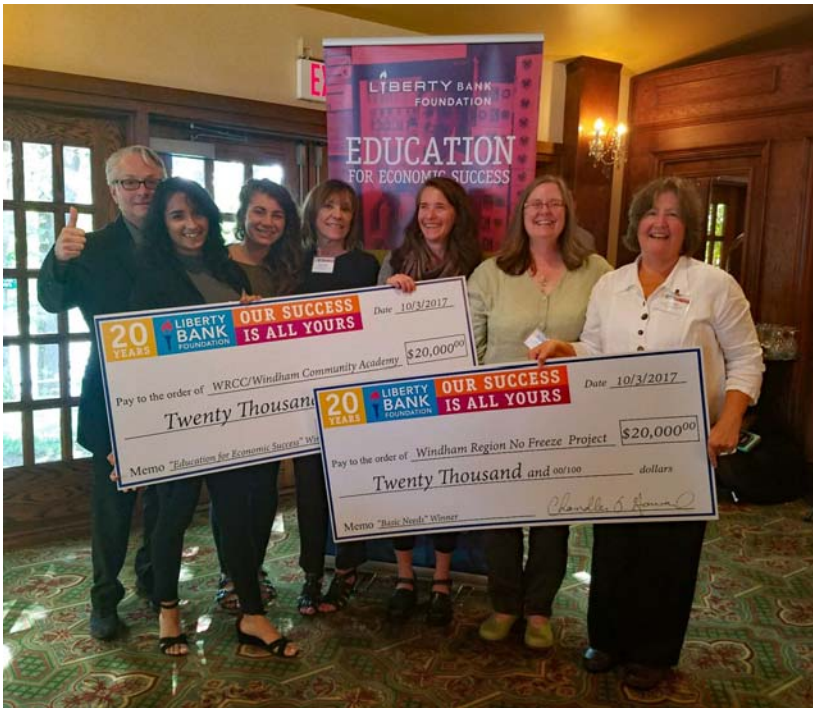
“It is so exciting to think we will actually get our initiative off the ground to help our youth struggling with homelessness in the northeast region,” said Leigh Duffy, executive director of the Windham Regional No Freeze Hospitality Center. “And it’s driven by the Liberty Bank Foundation.”

The two agencies were among 82 that submitted video contest entries explaining how they would use \$20,000 to enhance their impact on the people they serve. Nine finalists were selected and three winners were chosen by public voting on the Liberty Bank Foundation website between

September 5 and 15. The third winner was Middlesex Habitat of Humanity of CT, which will use the \$20,000 grant to expand the staff at its Cromwell ReStore.

Sue Murphy, Liberty Bank Foundation executive director, said, "Our goal with this competition was not only to fund some great ideas, but also to call attention to the wonderful work our nonprofit partners are doing in our communities."

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Liberty Bank Foundation has awarded over \$10.7 million in grants to nonprofit organizations within Liberty Bank's market area since its inception. The foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for people of low or moderate income by investing in three areas: education to promote economic success for children and families; affordable housing; and basic human needs, such as food and shelter. Along with its grantmaking, the foundation strives to foster the convening and collaboration of nonprofits, funders, business, and government to address community issues.



Representatives of the two Windham area winners of the Liberty Bank Foundation 20th Anniversary Grant Competition show off their \$20,000 grant checks. GROW Windham, a program of Windham Regional Community Council, and the Windham Region No Freeze Hospitality Center were two of three nonprofits that received the special grants, which were chosen by public voting on the foundation's website. L to R: Jeffrey Beadle, Farzana Zubair, Amanda daCunha, Susan Barney, and Sally Milius of Windham Regional Community Council; and Avery Lenhart and Leigh Duffy, Windham Region No Freeze Hospitality Center