

AURORA

Women and Girls Foundation



Celebrating a Record-Setting Year!

YOUR 2024 IMPACT REPORT

AN AUSPICIOUS YEAR: AURORA CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2025

In 2000, five of Hartford's extraordinary women leaders -- Leah Bailey Moon, Felice Gray-Kemp, Paddi LeShane, Marie O'Brien, and the late Eileen Kraus -- decided to pursue a regional strategy of focused philanthropy for women and girls, knowing that this approach had taken root in other parts of the country.

They recruited other "Early Believers," raised crucial funding and support, and launched the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, with the goal of increasing economic security, educational attainment, and leadership for women and girls in Greater Hartford.

Since then, the Aurora Foundation has provided more than \$2 million in community investments to more than 9,000 women and girls in 90+ organizations. What an incredible achievement!

AURORA

Women and Girls Foundation

Celebrating 25 Years



Paddi LeShane (left) and Marie O'Brien



Some "Early Believers" and Executive Director
Jenny Steadman

past 25 years. Some "Early Believers" actually began that reminiscing in September 2024 at the beautiful Hill-Stead Museum, at a gathering sponsored by Marie O'Brien.

And, throughout the year, we will spotlight the people who have fueled Aurora's mission over the past 25 years on our website and social media. **We invite you to share your Aurora story!** This QR code will take you to an online form where you can tell us how your history and Aurora's intersect -- and what the organization has meant to you.

Aurora will mark this milestone in the way it does best: **with the release of *Toward Equity: Investing in Women and Girls for Connecticut's Future***, a seminal research report that examines the status of women and girls during the first quarter of the 21st century and recommends strategies and policies that can accelerate the pace of progress toward gender and racial equity.

But we also love a party! So **we are planning a sparkling 2025 Luminary Celebration that will provide a great opportunity for Aurora supporters from every era to reunite and reflect** on all they have helped to accomplish over the



AURORA

Women and Girls Foundation



Jennifer Streadman

Dear Luminaries,

YOUR support of women and girls broke records in 2024! We invested your generosity back into the women and girls in our community at our highest levels ever.

We launched Connecticut's first Young Women's Initiative, bringing an innovative national program that builds leadership development, college and career readiness, and financial literacy for high school girls of color with funding from national partners like Melinda Gates' Pivotal Ventures and the Ford Foundation. The most innovative feature of the program is that the young women will identify key needs in their community and award \$20,000 to organizations providing services and solutions. This opportunity for the young women to become philanthropists and changemakers will help us build the next generation of women leaders!

Aurora's Luminary Celebration absolutely sparkled in its new home at The Bushnell thanks to the glow of your support. We welcomed many new men to our team through the 100 Men Campaign. And we had birthday parties and holiday gift exchanges designate Aurora as their beneficiary—we are so grateful for all the ways you make women and girls a priority.

Beyond Homework, Aurora's latest research report, highlighted that 1 in 5 women students are mothers. Supporting their success will have impact on two generations. A new grant award to CT Community College-Manchester is focused on increasing student moms' access to financial support and educational programming and expanding food pantry supplies to include diapers, formula, and kids clothing. We're proud to support all of our innovative and effective College Success programs that will serve over 280 students. Our Enhanced College Success program provides even more intensive support, offering direct assistance to cover housing, childcare, transportation, and technology to reduce the barriers that can keep single moms from graduating.

Our Women's Giving Circle set a record for membership and fundraising while focusing on Reproductive Equity, awarding \$30,000 for local doulas, advocacy, diapers, and reproductive health services. It is inspiring to be part of this community!

Building these educational, economic and leadership opportunities would not be possible without our amazing supporters, volunteers and staff. In 2024, Aurora's Board members led the organization and amplified our mission under the leadership of Chair Meghan Burns. Special thanks to our incredible staff—Program Manager Marie McNamara creatively showcases Aurora's impact and builds community with our grantee partners and Giving Circle; new Development Manager Michelle Murphy eloquently shares our accomplishments to widen Aurora's circle and find new support; and new Program Officer Anisah Colón-Simon inspires us with her dedication to the students in our Young Women's Initiative. What a joy to work with this dedicated team!

Thank you for making Aurora's 2024 sparkle—we can't wait to celebrate our 25th Anniversary with you in 2025!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a personal style.

Jennifer Steadman, Ph.D.
Executive Director

BEYOND HOMEWORK: Supports Needed for Student Mothers

Published in January 2024

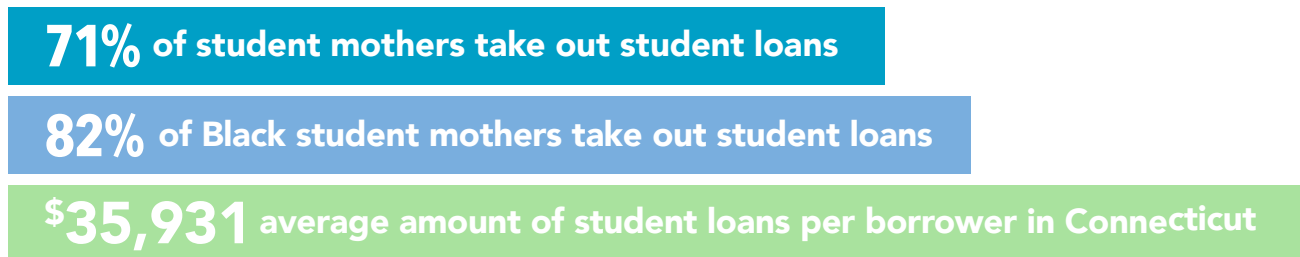
Among undergraduate students seeking postsecondary education in the U.S., about one-fifth are raising children while enrolled in college. While focusing on improving their children's futures as well as their own, student parents often face enormous financial barriers to academic success. For student mothers in Greater Hartford, supports are needed that address racial education disparities, student debt, and persistence and retention for adult learners. Aurora-funded College Success programs offer strategies and best practices to ensure more women students and more student mothers reach graduation.

Mothers Seek Educational Opportunity



Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20)

Student Debt Overburdens Student Mothers



Dundar, Afet, Lauren A. Tighe, and Jennifer Turner. 2023. "Underwater: Student Mothers and Fathers Struggle to Support Their Families and Pay Off College Loans." Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

ctdata.org/blog/student-debt

Adult Learners (age 25+) Struggle to Stay in College

52% persistence rate of Adult Learners who return to any college for a second year

48% retention of Adult Learners who return to the same college for a second year

Persistence and Retention Fall 2021 Beginning Postsecondary Student Cohort, (July 2023), Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Graduation Rates Continue to Show Racial Gaps in Connecticut

Low completion rates for 2-year degrees after six years suggests that students are left with student loan debt without the economic and career benefit of graduation.

6-YEAR COMPLETION RATE	4-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTION	2-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTION
Asian	86%	45%
White	76%	40%
Hispanic	61%	23%
Black	55%	20%

Lee, S. & Shapiro, D. (November 2023), Completing College: National and State Report with Longitudinal Data Dashboard on Six- and Eight-Year Completion Rates. (Signature Report 22), Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Aurora-Funded College Success Program Best Practices

- Identifying and addressing obstacles, such as food insecurity, high levels of stress, academic and occupational demands, lack of financial literacy and parenting responsibilities
- Increasing student exposure to new fields of study, career paths, and resources on and off campus
- Ensuring access to technology for remote learning
- Improving and promoting confidence, persistence, and self-advocacy
- Creating networks and supportive community environments with role models, mentors, and peers

Aurora-Funded Programs and Partner Institutions:

Barriers Can't Stop Us: Building Immigrant Women's Success, Hartford Public Library

Center for Academic Excellence LEAP Program, University of St. Joseph

Free to Succeed, Trinity College, Manchester Community College, Capital Community College, Community Partners in Action

Inspiring College Readiness and Increasing College Retention for Minority Women in the Greater Hartford Area, University of St. Joseph

Latinas in Leadership Institute, UConn Hartford

Launch Your Leadership Journey, Women's Leadership Institute, Asnuntuck Community College and Tunxis Community College

Leadership, Education and Development (LEAD), Women's Advancement Initiative, The University of Hartford

Pathways Through College, Grace Academy

Prison Seminar Series, Trinity College and York Correctional Institution

Success to Graduation, University of St. Joseph

WelCorps Leaders Program, University of Hartford

Women Investing in Securing an Education, Goodwin College

Women in STEM (WiSTEM), Manchester Community College

Women in Transition, Charter Oak State College

YW Career Women, YWCA Greater Hartford

Special thanks to the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for support of this research in memory of Lydia Garmany.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE GIVING: AURORA WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE 2024

When women come together with a shared vision, incredible things happen. The 2024 Aurora Women's Giving Circle is proof of that. With a focus on Reproductive Equity, this year's circle brought together 70 members, raising a record-breaking \$30,000 to support organizations working to ensure

RECORD-BREAKING YEAR!
70 members raised \$30,000

all women have access to the care they need to thrive.

What is the Aurora Women's Giving Circle?

The Giving Circle is a group of passionate women who pool their donations and work collaboratively to support organizations improving the lives of women and girls in Greater Hartford. Every donation, big or small, combines to create significant change. Through a democratic process, members learn,

discuss, and ultimately decide how to distribute funds—ensuring every voice is heard and **100% of donations** go directly to the chosen organizations.

2024 Focus: Reproductive Equity

The Giving Circle tackled the pressing issue of reproductive equity—acknowledging that access to reproductive care is not equal for all. Women of color, low-income women, and those without insurance often face the greatest barriers. The sessions began with a powerful talk by Dr. Lucinda Canty, who highlighted the racial and economic injustices in reproductive healthcare and called on us to close the gaps through education, advocacy, and support.

FUNDING IMPACT

After weeks of learning and thoughtful discussion, members voted to award grants to four impactful organizations:



Mutual Aid Hartford | \$10,000 Funding the Black Mommas Giving Circle, a support pod offering connections to doulas and emergency financial assistance to mothers and caregivers.



The Diaper Bank of Connecticut | \$7,500 Providing diapers, period products, and incontinence supplies to low-income families across the state.



Reproductive Equity Now | \$7,500 Expanding access by translating reproductive health information into multiple languages, ensuring more women can access critical resources.



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England | \$5,000 Supporting subsidized STI testing, helping women without insurance receive vital care during a growing public health crisis.

"Seeing our collective dollars go directly to local organizations doing this critical work is deeply fulfilling. We know we are making a real difference."

– Michele Dyson,
Steering Committee member

Interested in joining this remarkable group?

All are welcome—there is no minimum donation, and 100% of every contribution goes to community organizations. Together, we can build a future where all women and girls thrive.

Contact Marie McNamara,
marie@aurorafoundation.org

100 MEN CAMPAIGN CELEBRATION: A WIN-WIN!

The weather was gorgeous; Trinity Health Stadium rocked with exuberant soccer fans; Aurora's tents were filled with 65 enthusiastic supporters enjoying pizza and beer donated by Fox Farm Brewery; and the Hartford Athletic beat the Pittsburgh Riverhounds 2-0 in an exciting match on Saturday, June 15, 2024.



100 MEN CAMPAIGN

AURORA WOMEN & GIRLS FOUNDATION

It was the perfect recipe for the joyful culmination of the 9th annual 100 Men Campaign, which raised \$22,000 from individual donors in support of Aurora's mission. Remarkably, nearly 40% of the gifts came from first-time donors -- meaning that the Committee has educated a new and larger audience about Aurora.

Another highlight: Toward the end of the campaign, fundraising got a welcome boost from an anonymous donor who pledged a 50% match of every gift, up to \$1,500!

HOST COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs

Scott Burns, UBS

William Pennoyer, MD

Zack Adams, Fox Farm Brewery

Dean Andrews, Bank of America

Arunan Arulampalam (Honorary), Mayor of Hartford

Gordon Binkhorst, Pure Earth

Robert Eikel, PNT Data

James Healy, Cowdery, Murphy & Healy

Lee Hoffman, Pullman & Comley

Jeff Macel, Lodestar Energy

Tom Murphy, Cowdery, Murphy & Healy

Sonya Olson, Symetra

Tim Steadman, The Hartford

Peter Towey, City of New Britain Fire Department

To top it all off, Aurora was featured on the Jumbotron twice -- with a sponsor-recognition video before the match and an Aurora overview video at halftime. It was a fantastic way to spread the word about Aurora to thousands of fans who crowded into the stadium that evening.

Many thanks to the Green & Blue Foundation for hosting the event and to the 100 Men Host Committee, led by Co-Chairs Scott Burns and Bill Pennoyer, whose enthusiastic leadership translated directly into increased awareness and support for Aurora's mission.



Join us for the 10th annual 100 Men Celebration!
Thursday, April 24, 2025, 8am
Mandell Jewish Community Center
West Hartford

Featuring guest speaker
Hartford Mayor
Arunan Arulampalam

Scan code to register



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Partner, Ruel Ruel Burns Feldman & Britt

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Realtor, Connecticut and Florida

Amy Miller, Second Vice Chair

Certified Financial Planner, Wealthspire Advisors

Maureen Cooper, Treasurer

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Data Integration Strategist, Hartford Data Collaborative

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College Career Pathways, CT State -- Capital

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Karen Lott

Executive Director, Women's League Child Development Center

Stephani Roman

Attorney, Robinson & Cole LLP

Tina St. Pierre

Partner and Chief Operating Officer, Secondaries Group, Ares Management

Staff

Jennifer B. Steadman, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Anisah Colón-Simon

Young Women's Initiative Program Officer

Marie McNamara

Program Manager

Michelle M. Murphy

Development Manager



NEW BOARD MEMBERS



RAUCHELL BECKFORD-ANDERSON, an attorney with Shipman & Goodwin's Employment and Labor Practice Group, first became involved with Aurora as a volunteer for the Luminary Celebration in 2023. A graduate of Capital Community College, CCSU, and Western New England University School of Law, Beckford-Anderson clerked for several Connecticut Superior Court judges and served as a judicial intern to the Honorable Robert G. Fields at the Western Housing Court in Springfield, MA. She is also on the Boards of Operation Fuel and the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity.



KATHERINE HALL, also a volunteer for the 2023 Luminary Celebration, is the Vice President of Global Programs for Koyamada International Foundation, a non-governmental organization whose mission is to provide humanitarian aid and to empower youth and women to reach their full potential. She and her family lived in Tokyo for 11 years, where she was the director of the longest-running daily outreach program for that city's unhoused population. She was also Statutory Auditor for the American School in Japan and volunteered for the Hands-On Tokyo and Shine On! Kids organizations. A former litigator and television reporter, Katherine serves on the U.S.-Japan Council Development Committee.



TINA ST. PIERRE, a longtime supporter of the Aurora Foundation, is a Partner and Chief Operating Officer in the Secondaries Group of Ares Management; she also serves on the firm's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council. Previously, she was a Partner and Chief Administrative Officer at Landmark Partners and a Senior Tax Accountant at Arthur Andersen LLP. A graduate of Bryant College, she also serves on the Boards for Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Junior Achievement.

NEW STAFF



ANISAH COLÓN-SIMON is the part-time Program Officer for Aurora's Young Women's Initiative, a new leadership-development program for high school girls of color based at YWCA New Britain. A Hartford native, she has extensive experience in community service, program coordination, and youth engagement in Hartford and in Middletown, where she is a senior at Wesleyan University majoring in American Studies with a concentration in Racial & Ethnic Politics and a double minor in Caribbean Studies and Human Rights Advocacy. A Board member of Hartford Promise since 2023, she has also worked for the Middletown Youth Service Bureau, the Wesleyan Center for Prison Education, and FRESH New London, a food justice non-profit.



MICHELLE M. MURPHY, a seasoned fundraising and communications professional, became Aurora's Development Manager in March 2024, after serving as the Vice President of Development and Marketing at the Springfield Museums in Springfield, MA. A graduate of Georgetown University and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, she also served as the Executive Director of the Malta House of Care Clinic in Hartford from 2016-21, and held Development or Communications positions at Mercy High School, Kingswood Oxford School, and Northwest Catholic High School.

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPONSORS 2024

We are so grateful to the people and places who provide full-year support to Aurora's operations through their commitments as Community Partner sponsors.

PRESENTING (\$25,000)



FAMILY FIRST LIFE
THE ROGUE IMO



SYMETRA[®]
RETIREMENT | BENEFITS | LIFE



Symetra
Empowers[™]

MENTOR (\$15,000)



GREEN  BLUE
FOUNDATION

VISIONARY (\$10,000)



Be Community Kind.™

PILLAR (\$5,000)

COWDERY,
MURPHY &
HEALY, LLC

Max Cares
Foundation
a recipe for successful giving

Robinson+Cole

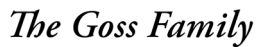


Thank you for your visible leadership and belief in the investment in women and girls.

INNOVATOR (\$2,500)



CHANGE AGENT (\$1,500)



AURORA FINANCIAL REPORT FY 2024

Income

Individual Donor Support	\$212,312
Charlotte & Hy Goode Family Fund Supporting Women’s Potential	\$257,500
Corporate Community Partnerships	\$126,062
2024 Luminary Celebration	\$129,297
Other Contributions and Income	\$49,547
Women’s Giving Circle	\$32,900*
100 Men Campaign	\$22,131
Symetra Empowers Communities Grant	\$25,000
Young Women’s Initiative Funding	\$92,000
Total Revenue	\$946,750

*Funds received after June 2024 will be applied to 2025 Giving Circle

Expenses

Community Investments Grantmaking	\$470,342
Research and Women and Girls Data Platform	\$27,400
Operating Expenses	\$430,186
Total Expenses	\$927,928

Assets

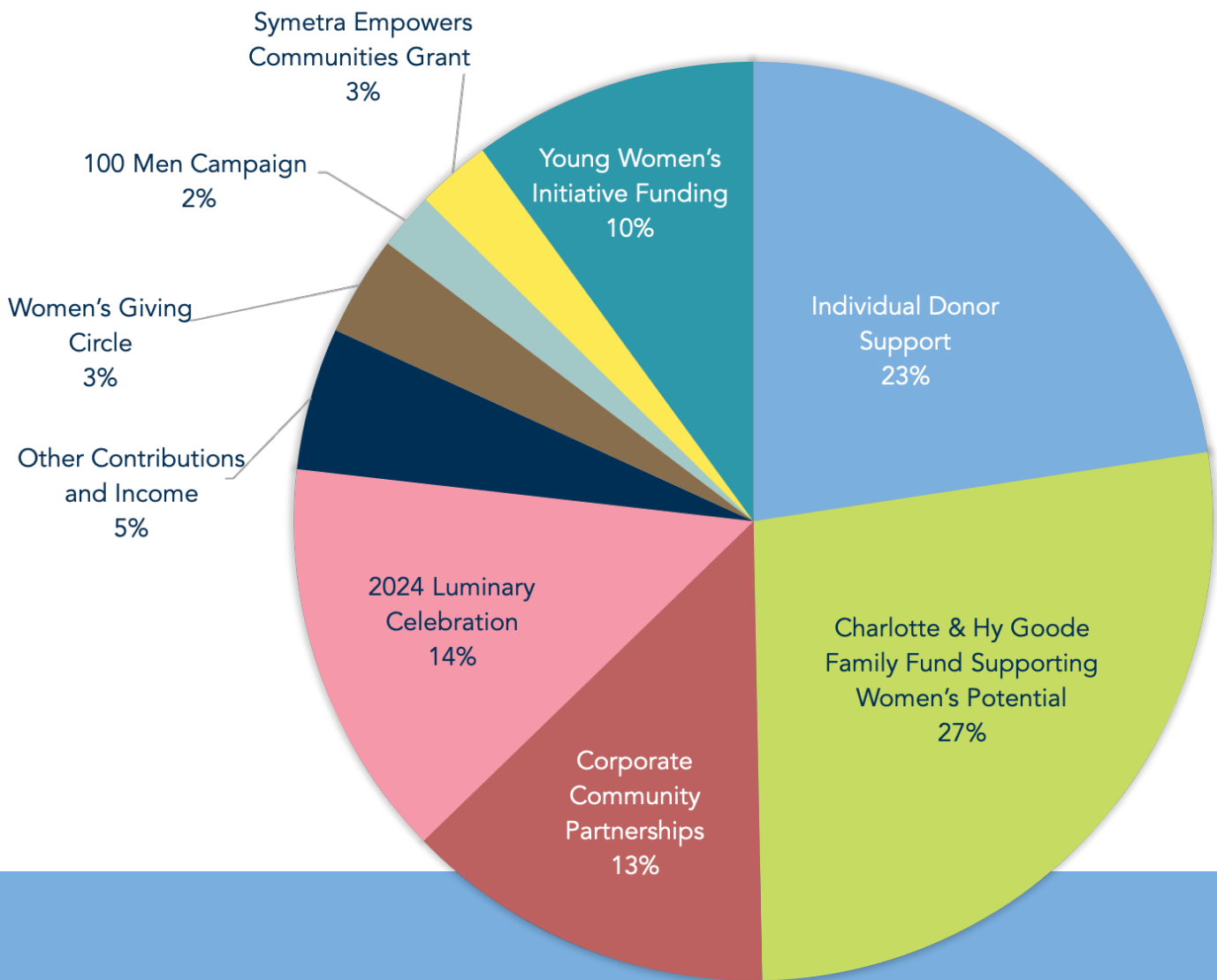
Designated Endowment	\$847,974
Cash and Operating Reserves	\$440,642
Other Assets	\$91,878
Total Assets	\$1,380,494

AURORA'S ESG INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Aurora’s commitment to driving positive change extends beyond Greater Hartford to the global investment landscape. In 2023, we adopted an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment strategy for our endowment portfolio. Here’s why:

- **Mission Aligned:** An ESG investment strategy aligns perfectly with our mission and core values because it allows us to actively support companies that prioritize gender diversity, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.
- **Creating Impact:** ESG investing allows us to leverage our financial resources to create meaningful social and environmental impact. Through careful selection of investments, we can contribute to positive change in areas like gender equality, climate action, and community development.
- **Risk Management:** Integrating ESG criteria into our investment process helps us identify and mitigate potential risks associated with environmental, social, and governance issues.
- **Enhancing Returns:** ESG investing has demonstrated the potential to generate competitive financial returns while simultaneously advancing social and environmental objectives.
- **Leading by Example:** By embracing ESG principles, we hope to inspire other organizations, investors, and donors to join us in advancing gender equality, sustainability, and social justice.

2024 Income



MISSION

The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation galvanizes resources to increase economic security, educational attainment, and leadership for women and girls in the Greater Hartford region.

VISION

We envision strong, equitable communities in which all women and girls realize their potential and are full, valued, and sought-after participants -- economically, politically, and socially.

STRATEGIES

Aurora has a strong track record of strategic investment in economic and educational opportunities. Using a focused gender and racial equity lens, Aurora looks to engage individuals and institutions in philanthropy, develop and share cutting-edge research, direct grant-making and capacity-building resources to nonprofits, and convene and mobilize community partners for action.

Our mission, vision, values, and strategies support all women and girls inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

INVESTING IN COLLEGE SUCCESS

In 2024, Aurora awarded \$100,000 in College Success grants to five programs supporting more than 280 women pursuing college degrees in Greater Hartford. Each of these programs address both personal barriers and academic challenges—ensuring women not only stay in school, but thrive.

Aurora-backed research underscores the urgency: 71% of student mothers rely on loans, with Black student mothers borrowing at even higher rates. Yet, only 52% of students aged 25 or older return for their second year, and just 20% of Black and 23% of Hispanic students earn associate degrees within six years. Without support, these women risk being left with debt but no degree.

Aurora knows that education is a proven path to economic security. In Hartford

County, women with bachelor's degrees earn 84% more than those with only a high school diploma. Yet, student mothers, first-generation students, and women of color often face the steepest obstacles. Aurora-funded programs break down those barriers by providing mentoring, academic support, and financial advice while addressing mental health and wellness.

Together, we are building a future where women and girls achieve educational success, economic security, and leadership opportunities—strengthening families, communities, and our region.

Read more about Aurora's college success grantees:



AURORA'S 2024 GRANTEES

Women in Transition Program | Charter Oak State College (\$22,500)

Supporting nine single mothers with tuition, fees, technology, textbooks, telehealth, and workshops to ease financial, physical, and emotional burdens.



A Higher Degree of **Online Learning**

LEAD Program | The Women's Advancement Initiative at the University of Hartford (\$15,000)

Empowering over 100 diverse women with leadership workshops, career coaching, and resilience training.



THE WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE
CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF HARTFORD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

YW Career Women Program | YWCA Hartford Region (\$22,500)

Assisting 40 women, most single mothers of color, with case management, career coaching, and wellness support at CT State Community Colleges.



Dreaming with Kids Program | Manchester Community College Foundation (\$20,000)

Launched a new initiative this year to connect 30 student mothers to financial aid, childcare, food support, and a peer network.



Barriers Can't Stop Us Program | Hartford Public Library (\$20,000)



Guiding 50 immigrant women—first-generation college students—through financial aid, advising, and peer mentoring.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

"The 'Barriers Can't Stop Us' program has helped me gain valuable strategies for success, such as study habits and time management skills. My future looks bright and promising. Thanks to this support, I have the tools and confidence to achieve my goals. Today, I feel confident pursuing my dream of becoming a businesswoman."

— Belen Aparicio



ENHANCED COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM REDUCES BARRIERS

The Enhanced College Success program continues to demonstrate strong early success in helping non-traditional, parenting, and low-income women persist and thrive in higher education. Since its pilot launch in January 2023, fueled by the generosity of the Charlotte and Hy Goode Family Fund Supporting Women's Potential at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, students receiving "wrap-around" support, including help with housing, childcare, transportation, and additional financial and career coaching are defying national statistics on college persistence for student parents. Charlotte Goode, a lifelong guardian ad litem, champions economic security for women by investing in higher education and these essential supports.

As Charlotte's son, Ken Goode shared: "I was particularly impressed that Aurora is looking beyond its initial vision and developing partnerships to enhance the program."

Bobbi Schmidt, Charlotte's niece, affirms the program's impact: "Even with only two years under our belt and our small 'sample size,' there is strong evidence our program is working and having a positive impact on our students' lives and academic pursuits."

This collaborative approach is proving effective. One of the students in the program has overcome academic setbacks and is now inspiring her peers as she prepares to graduate with her son by her side. Her story exemplifies the program's life-changing impact—and the ripple effect of the Goode family's generosity, which is reaching far beyond the students directly served.

"I was particularly impressed that Aurora is looking beyond its initial vision and developing partnerships to enhance the program."

– Ken Goode

While we continue to refine and grow, the results are clear: this program is working. It is empowering women to earn degrees, secure family-sustaining careers, and build brighter futures—for themselves, their children, and their communities.



YOUR GENEROSITY LIGHTS THE WAY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS!

\$50,000+

Jim and Anne Carroll Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Charlotte and Hy Goode Family Fund Supporting Women's Potential at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
The New York Women's Foundation

\$25,000-\$49,999

Family First Life
Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, in memory of Lydia Garmany
Symetra Empowers Communities Grant

\$10,000-\$24,999

Ares Management
William O. & Carole P. Bailey Family Foundation
Barbara V.G. Coffin Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Community Foundation for Monterey County
Larry and Carle Mowell
Green & Blue Foundation
Liberty Bank
Liberty Bank Foundation
Morgan Stanley GIFT
Michele Dyson
Tina St. Pierre
Ann E. Thomas
Travelers

\$5,000-\$9,999

Innella Bernardini Giving Fund
Sylvia Bernardini
Bink Family Fund
Karen Binkhorst
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The Community Fund for Women and Girls at the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
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\$2,500-\$4,999

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UBS
YWCA Hartford Region

\$1,000-\$2,499

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Cigna
Adrienne Cochrane
Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity
Kyra Dorsey
Eastern Connecticut State University
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Robinson Condren Family Fund
Ellen Robinson
Susan and Joel Rottner
Ann Sagalyn
Nancy Antonacci Shaich
Shipman & Goodwin, LLP
Simply Fresh Food
T. Renee Williams
Gayle Temkin
Trinity College
Trouble LLC
Wealthspire Advisors
Wetzel Family Charitable Fund
Whittlesey
Zachs Family Foundation, Inc.

Up to \$999

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Corey Acker
Tod Alberghini
Lisa Aldave
Eileen Allgrove

Yvonne Alston
Abby Alter
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Mim Carlson
Pete Carlson

The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation sincerely appreciates the individuals and organizations who made gifts to Aurora between January 1 and December 31, 2024. Please let us know of any errors or omissions by contacting Development Manager Michelle Murphy at mmurphy@aurorafoundation.org. Thank you!

Natalie Carpenter
 Nicole Castelli
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Fox Farm Brewery
 Marie O'Brien

Matching Gifts

We are grateful to the following companies that generously match gifts made to Aurora (and to the donors who take the time to request the match!):

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Aurora is humbled to be the recipient of donations made in honor or in memory of cherished luminaries in our community.

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Richard G. Broad
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Luminary Celebration

Oh, what a sparkling night we had on October 23rd! With over 350 incredible Luminaries joining us, we celebrated big—raising a record-breaking \$129,297!

The Bushnell radiated with light—both from within its grand halls and from the collective brilliance of the audience gathered to celebrate and uplift the futures of women and girls in Greater Hartford. Together, we created a glow that will extend far beyond one evening.

The warmth and joy of reconnection were palpable, as longtime friends and new supporters mingled, united by a shared commitment to possibility. The evening was graced by the powerful words of Dr. Khalilah Brown-Dean, whose keynote address illuminated the power of community, resilience, and opportunity. Her insights served as a reminder that our collective light can shine brightest when we lift each other.

But the true stars of the evening were the young women who shared their stories—voices that carried hope, determination, and a vision for the future. Each quote, each story, was a beacon.

We are endlessly grateful to our donors who make this work possible—especially those who contributed to Anne Dante Carroll's incredible \$25,000 matching challenge. Your generosity is the fuel that keeps these lights shining. The message shared that night was "When you light the path for one girl, you light the path for many." Thank YOU for being the light.



Anne Dante Carroll

"I am proud to have been part of the Aurora community since 2018.

Every year I learn more about the great and growing need to support women and girls in our communities. I am continually amazed by the passion of the leaders and luminaries involved with the Aurora Foundation and their work to leverage donations and find creative ways to make a real impact on women and girls in CT."

Scan here to read and see more about Luminary





2024 Luminary Committee

Kyra Dorsey, Chair

Committee Members

Rauchell Beckford-Anderson
 Karen Binkhorst
 Tracey Flynn
 Katherine Hall
 Maureen Kennedy
 Elaine Leshem
 Mickey Mattei
 Mary Millican
 Michelle O'Connell
 Stephani Roman

2024 Luminary Hosts

Rauchell Beckford-Anderson	Marie McNamara
Karen Binkhorst	Amy Miller
Kate Bittinger Eikel	Mary Millican
Meghan Burns	Leah Murchie
Samantha Castillo-Davis	Michelle Murphy
Anne Dante Carroll	Michelle O'Connell
Michele Dante Dyson	Joyce Petrella
Karen Diaz Meaie	Aisha Petteway
Kyra Dorsey	Trisha Pitter
Kate Farrar	Ellen Robinson
Janet Bailey Faude	Stephani Roman
Tracey Flynn	Gilda Roncari
Katherine Hall	Uneeder Ruth
Karen Jarmoc	Bobbi Schmidt
Evelyn Johnson	Donna Sodipo
Maureen Kennedy	Tina St. Pierre
Elaine Leshem	Jenny Steadman
Mickey Mattei	Maggie Willard
	T. Renee Williams

"Thanks to this program, I have learned advocacy, pushing for policies and resources that address our unique needs. Thank you to all the supporters of the Aurora Foundation. Having this opportunity means a lot to me because, as a student mom with a million things going on, it is nice to not feel so alone."

- Kwanisha, student in the Dreaming for Kids Program at CT State Manchester





Coffee and Convening

Connection. Collaboration. Community.

To join this dynamic and collaborative community, contact Program Manager Marie McNamara (marie@aurorafoundation.org)

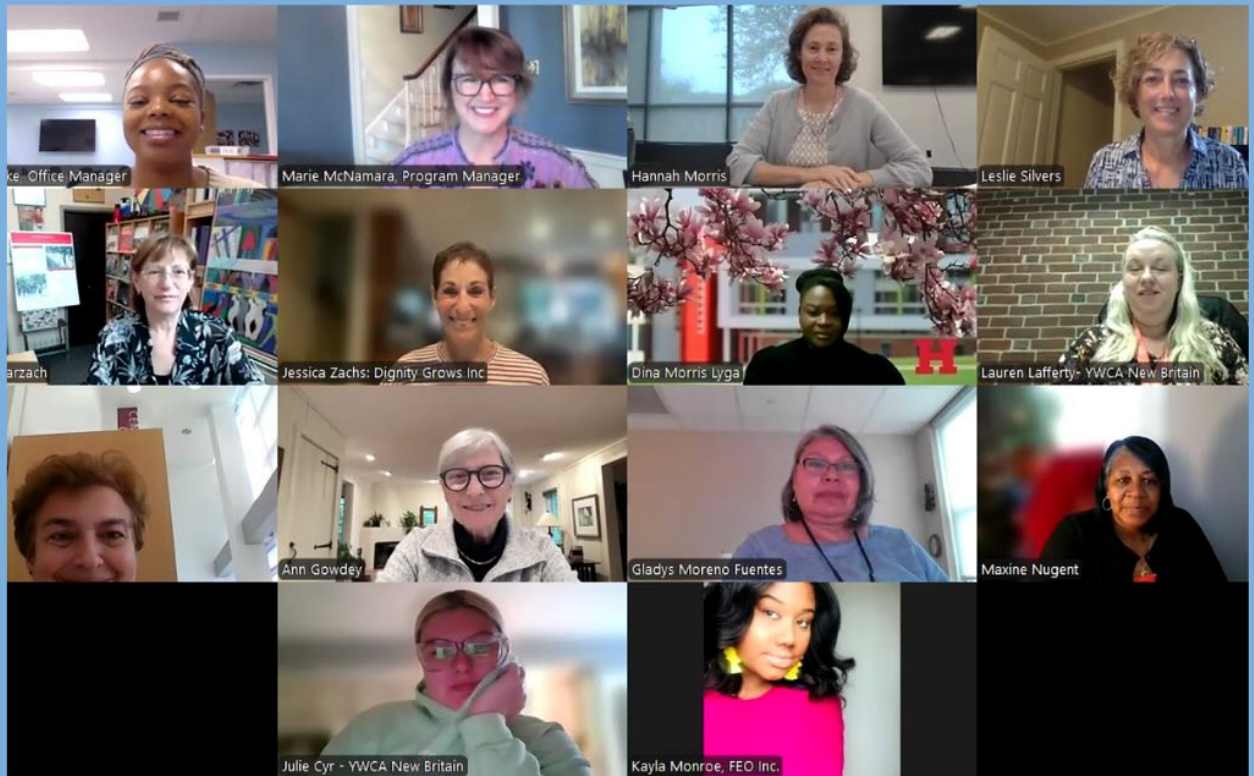
Aurora brings together local organizations and partners across Greater Hartford for open dialogue and shared learning. These gatherings continue to foster partnerships, encourage knowledge-sharing, and strengthen connections among those working to empower women and girls.

In May 2024, attendees shared program successes, discussed ongoing challenges, and explored ways to support each other's work. New collaborations were sparked,

including a connection between Leslie Silvers of Access College Consulting and Hartford Public Library, which led to FAFSA and college application support for students.

Participants leave these virtual meetings feeling encouraged and inspired, with resources like an Aurora Contact Sheet and reference links. These events reaffirm that we are stronger together, working collectively to create a brighter future for women and girls in Greater Hartford

Where was Aurora?



AURORA
Women and Girls Foundation

LEAD LUNCH & CONVERSATIONS

On February 23, 2024, Aurora was invited by the staff of the Women's Advancement Initiative at the University of Hartford to attend their Lunch & Conversations event. The afternoon was filled with meaningful discussions, as students from the LEAD Program sat alongside Aurora Board members and supporters, exchanging insights on resilience, leadership, and navigating challenges.

The table conversations fostered connections across generations, giving students the opportunity to practice professional dialogue and build relationships with community leaders. Attendees left feeling inspired, hopeful, and reminded of the power of women supporting women.



Cynthia Puerta, a non-traditional student and entrepreneur, moved the entire group by sharing her personal journey and vision for healing and empowerment.



WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FORUM

The 2024 Aurora Women's Leadership Forum was a day to remember—a powerful gathering of nearly 200 students, mentors and aspiring changemakers who left inspired and equipped to lead. Held in partnership with CT State Capital and YWCA Hartford Region, and generously sponsored by Travelers Insurance, the event was about more than leadership; it was about LEGACY—laying the foundation for the next generation of women leaders.

The Forum connects Greater Hartford-area college students with mentors and role models, offering career advice, networking opportunities, and practical skills to help students thrive both in school and beyond. The energy in the room during the networking lunch was electric—students and mentors exchanged ideas, encouragement, and even a few business cards. You could feel the future taking shape right there.

Throughout the day, the spirit of mentorship was everywhere. Panelists and facilitators shared their wisdom with honesty and warmth, reminding students that success isn't a straight line—but with support and perseverance, it is always within reach.



The Women's Leadership Forum was generously sponsored by **TRAVELERS** 



Student Voices:

"I would like to personally extend a huge thank you for hosting today's Women's Leadership Forum. Words are not even enough to express my gratitude. Just to be in a room filled with so many successful, empowering, knowledgeable women who have overcome so much is a blessing in itself, and I truly thank you for this opportunity...The tools I learned today I will definitely use in the future, and I will also share them with my son as he goes off to college this upcoming year."

– Shanya Douglas, CT State Manchester Student, YWCA Career Women Program



Highlights from the Day:

Professional Leaders Panel: Melissa Rodriguez (Travelers Insurance) and Dr. Lucinda Canty (Lucinda’s House and UMass Amherst) shared their journeys as women leaders, emphasizing resilience, showing up, and the power of community. Their words sparked inspiration across the room.

Student Panel: Juliana Yanarico (Barriers Can’t Stop Us Program, Hartford Public Library & CT State Manchester), Gabriella Irwin-Parra (LEAD Program, The Women’s Advancement Initiative, University of Hartford), Adriana Conlin (Dreaming with Kids Program, CT State Manchester), and Maria Merced (YW Career Women Program, YWCA Hartford Region) reminded us all that persistence and support can break down barriers. Their stories were honest, hopeful, and deeply moving.



Breakout Sessions:

- **Career Exploration through Internships:** Ivelisse Maldonado (Travelers EDGE® Program Manager) and John Thomas (Capital’s Career Advancement Program, CT State Capital) connected students with internship opportunities and career services.
- **Financial Wellness:** Silvia Herrera-Ocampo (Liberty Bank) provided tools to manage finances with confidence and purpose.
- **LinkedIn Profile Building and Personal Branding:** Yvonne Alston (Indelible Impressions) coached students on building an online presence and standing out professionally.
- **Accessing Community Resources:** Chakeya Chapman (CT State Capital) and Jessica Garcia (Interval House) guided students to vital on-campus and community support systems.

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: THE AURORA YOUNG WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

The Aurora Young Women's Initiative (YWI) is a pioneering program equipping young women of color with skills, confidence, and resources to shape their futures. A collaboration between the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, YWCA New Britain, and the National Philanthropic Collaborative of Young Women's Initiatives, YWI is the first program of its kind in Connecticut.

Launched in October 2024 with 25 high school students, YWI meets weekly at YWCA New Britain's House of Teens. Workshops focus on financial literacy, career readiness, wellness, and advocacy, with guest speakers introducing diverse career paths. Participants also explore post-secondary education opportunities and build professional networks.

A distinctive feature of YWI is its hands-on leadership and philanthropy training. Participants manage a \$20,000 grantmaking process, funding local organizations addressing critical community issues. They also attend the Aurora Women's Leadership Forum, connecting with college students and mentors who share their backgrounds.





With support from Ares Charitable Foundation, Melinda Gates' Pivotal Ventures, the Ford Foundation, and others, YWI is an investment in future leaders. At the program's launch, Secretary of the State Stephanie Thomas affirmed its impact, telling participants, *"One day, one of you could be standing where I am now."*

***"One day, one of you
could be standing
where I am now."***

*—Secretary of the State
Stephanie Thomas*

With strong community partnerships, YWI is building a future where young women of color have the tools to lead, advocate, and thrive.



Save the Date for Luminary 2025!



Wednesday, October 22, 2025
The Bushnell, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford

Mark your calendars for a sparkling evening where we will joyfully celebrate all of the inspiring Luminaries in our community. Proceeds will support Aurora's community investments, with a focus on College Success programs and research and advocacy for women and girls.

Stay tuned! Registration details to come via email and Aurora's social media accounts.

Want to get involved? Contact Michelle Murphy (mmurphy@aurorafoundation.org) to join the planning committee or Marie McNamara (marie@aurorafoundation.org) to become a Luminary Ambassador and bring your network to this important event.

Let's make 2025 even more impactful - together!

P.O. Box 370537, West Hartford, CT 06137
Phone: 860-969-3435

aurorafoundation.org

 AuroraWomenandGirlsFoundation  @aurorafoundation  aurorawomen