

# BTCE

## NEWS

Together we can make  
life here even better



## Future Home of Health and Wellness Greater Torrington

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DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
SERVICES

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Foundation for Community Health

for its encouragement, funding and support



### REGIONAL

## Leveraging Partnerships and Building Community

### Foundation for Community Health at 20

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of Foundation for Community Health (FCH), a nonprofit dedicated to improving the health and well-being of residents across eastern Dutchess County and southeastern Columbia County in New York and the northwestern corner of Connecticut. To date, FCH has invested over \$20 million in this invaluable work via community-wide grants aimed at shaping the health and wellness of the region.

Founding President and CEO Nancy Heaton has been at the helm for the duration—dreaming of the future while leveraging community partnerships with the goal of launching a much-needed community health and wellness center in Connecticut's Northwest Corner. In an area historically underserved by healthcare, this has required steadfast determination, and the project, 15 years in the making, has finally come to fruition.

"We've been trying since 2019 to secure bonding, which was approved last year," said Heaton referencing

## Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

(Continued on page 7)



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## Berkshire Taconic

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

800 North Main Street  
Sheffield, MA 01257-9503  
413.229.0370  
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## Message from Leadership



Partnership is very much top of mind as we come off a record year in grants, gifts and new funds—partnerships with the hundreds of nonprofits changing lives in our communities and with donors that make this work possible. We head into spring with momentum and purpose.

One long-term partner, the Foundation for Community Health, celebrates 20 years of improving health and wellness in our community with the groundbreaking of a new federally qualified health and wellness center. We are grateful for this long and fruitful relationship. Our nonprofit agency fund partners like Berkshire Choral International entrust us to invest and grow their endowments. This music-filled organization is back on the road, bringing joy to our region and beyond.

The Northeast Dutchess Scholarship Fund was established and grown through a partnership with a longtime BTCF donor and built upon by another key donor partner. It now provides scholarships to students from all four high schools in northeast Dutchess County. And with the support of the Alice and Richard Henriquez Memorial Fund and Youth World Awareness Program, young people were able to explore Tanzania in January.

We are thrilled to be connecting with our partners in person, continuing to work hand in hand to make life here even better.



Peter Taylor, President

## Snapshot

*“We enrich the educational experience of every Pittsfield Public Schools student by connecting them with masterful arts programming offered to our district by Berkshire County’s vast wealth of cultural community partners.”*

—Yvette “Jamuna” Sirker,  
Coordinator of Arts Integration  
& Community Partnerships  
for the Pittsfield Public Schools

Grants from BTCF’s Arts Build Community initiative and Pittsfield Education Enrichment Fund support this work.







Pamela Badila (second row, far right) pictured with her travel group of students and community member Paulette Clarke (bottom row, far right). Photo courtesy of Pamela Badila.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

## From Hudson to Tanzania

### *Charting a Course of Understanding Through Travel*

Pamela Badila is the co-founder and director of Diata Diata International Folkloric Theatre based in Hudson, NY. Badila is a teacher, artist, storyteller, and mentor who has introduced youth of all ethnicities to the marvels of the African continent while encouraging an equitable appreciation for one another. In 2022, when she was challenged to help several of her adult mentees embark on a journey to engage firsthand with the culture of Ancestral Africa, she hardly balked. Funding from Berkshire Taconic's Alice and Richard Henriquez Memorial Fund, awarded to support this journey, proved akin to icing on the proverbial cake.

"Although I had been before, this was an opportunity to help my students of many years to discover Africa in a safe and immersive manner," said Badila whose trip with Curious on Tanzania allowed for on-the-ground research into the history, society and customs of Africa, which is not typically offered in our schools. "We were amazed by the beauty and charm of the country and the resourcefulness of the people," said Badila of the ten days she and six college students—accompanied by Hudson community icon Paulette Clarke, owner of West Indies Natural Food and Grocery on Warren Street—spent exploring Tanzania in January 2023.

The Henriquez Fund that facilitated this important journey was formed in 1995 to support international experiences for young people and was born of a belief held by Mr. Henriquez that an understanding of other people and cultures is essential for a just world. "The

pandemic reaffirmed the value of travel, and we are thrilled to be receiving applications like Pamela's for service trips abroad," said Sarah Stack, co-chair of the Henriquez Fund Committee. Sarah views these opportunities for personal growth—and the desire to become better informed citizens of the world by building bridges between people and cultures—as something to be encouraged, applauded, and supported. "These young people are our hope for a better future," she emphasized.

This trip embodied the spirit of Mr. Henriquez' belief and affirmed the power of travel to dispel misconceptions and animate connections with global histories. "The need to know is growing," said Badila who, as a child, recalls Africa being depicted as a wasteland, supported by images of starving children and constant reports of wars despite the continent's endowment of natural resources and its rich history. "The feeling of something vital to our sense of self being remarkably missing, and our desire to align with this connection we have been severed from so long ago," she continued.

"We deeply appreciate the assistance offered by Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation," said Badila, who hopes to return with a project to visit yet another remarkable country very soon. "It's more than learning, and it's more than appreciating," she said of the immersive experience that allowed her students to connect with the legacy of their ancestors. "It's about reconnecting with the who-we-are within." ■





BERKSHIRE COUNTY

## Portraits of Generosity

### *Berkshire Choral International Expands Horizons of Amateur Singers*

Following years of COVID-related challenges, the staff of Berkshire Choral International (BCI) is excited to launch a full summer season of programs that pairs amateur adult singers with inspiring conductors throughout the nation and world—all while keeping their heart in Berkshire County. Their enriching and immersive work as a fantasy camp for choral musicians is supported through a nonprofit agency fund at BTCF.

“It’s really about expanding horizons,” said BCI President Steven Smith. “The average amateur singer, who may be well trained, has a limited ability to be a part of the international community of professional choral musicians. We give people a platform where they can be part of exhilarating performances, as well as travel and meet like-minded singers and artists.”

At the height of the pandemic, BCI was forced to move its classes online. They recorded workshops and hosted some live virtual events “at a time when singing was one of the most dangerous things,” Smith said. “People were really feeling the loss of their choral communities, so we tried to fill the gap. The good news is that it allowed us to reach new singers—more than 3,000 constituents joined us online that had not previously been with us.”

Smith emphasized that BCI plans to reach out to young singers who may not be familiar with their mission, and it aims to diversify its musical offerings. “We’ve added interesting programming

focused on the African American musical tradition. And we’re partnering with a national organization called Chorus America to help support a new institute that they’re building for administrative leaders from historically marginalized communities,” he said.

Over the summer, more than 450 singers will participate in one of BCI’s signature singing weeks, which feature an intensive seven-day process to rehearse and perform a major work. This year’s experiences kick off on May 24 at the Tanglewood Learning Institute in Lenox, Mass., followed by events in Seattle, Wash., Blacksburg, Va., and Florence, Italy.

“Yes, it’s for amateur singers, but they really push you to operate at a professional level,” one past participant said. “To immerse yourself in music, to meet fabulous people from all over, and to work with the most brilliant, informative, inspiring conductors, that’s what I love the best,” said another. A singer summed up his experience: “It’s really special to make music with folks who have such a deep heart and love for it.”

Berkshire Choral International has strong ties to BTCF. It was founded more than 40 years ago by the late John Hoyt Stookey, who sat on BTCF’s board from 2007 to 2013. BCI opened a nonprofit agency fund with the foundation in December 2021 to receive planned giving support and utilize BTCF’s investment and administrative management, as well as its professional investment committee.





2022 choral workshop at Tanglewood Learning Institute of music by African-American composers, with Dr. Anthony Trecek-King conducting. Photo credit: Chris Tucci

“We had previously had our endowment and reserve funds with a traditional fund manager. We were not thrilled with the rate of return, and it wasn’t giving back. It wasn’t creating value in the way that we really wanted it to,” Smith said. “When we started the conversation with Berkshire Taconic, we realized that it was a way to keep our investment in the Berkshire community. What we’re building is going to be sustained.”

BCI is also aligned with BTCF’s strategic priority of community engagement, which aims to bridge divides and create connections through arts and culture. “Choruses are a great platform for social engagement and social change. According to a national study, choral singers engage at a civic level at higher levels in almost any group—they vote more often, they volunteer more, and they engage in more empathetic behaviors,” Smith said. “For me, enlarging the choral music world is part of healing the world.” ■

To learn more about opening a nonprofit agency fund for your organization, contact Chief Philanthropy Officer Kara Mikulich at 413.229.0370 ext. 124 or [kmikulich@berkshiretaconic.org](mailto:kmikulich@berkshiretaconic.org).

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—Steven Smith,  
BCI President

## GET MORE BTCF NEWS ON OUR WEBSITE!

- Download BTCF News to share with friends.
- View extra photos.
- Learn more about BTCF funds, including Agency Funds, Donor Advised Funds, our Community Fund, and more.
- Explore our expanded Regional Roundup.





Dover High School graduate Vicky Lin, recipient of Northeast Dutchess Fund Scholarship and pre-med student at Stonybrook University.

1754  
Webutuck graduate Carrissa Whitehead received a Wilder-funded scholarship last year to study math at Columbia University.

NORTHEAST DUTCHESS COUNTY

# Scholarships Help Students Follow Their Dreams

Welcome Home  
Lions!

## Generous Donors Provide Renewable Four-Year Awards

Vicky Lin graduated from Dover High School last year with a dream to pursue a career in dermatology. She is currently working on a pre-med track at Stonybrook University with support from the Northeast Dutchess Scholarship Fund. "My appreciation for this scholarship cannot be described with words. It will relieve a tremendous amount of financial stress as I pursue higher-level education," she said, noting she plans to show her gratitude through public service.

For nearly 10 years, BTCF's Northeast Dutchess Scholarship Fund has awarded renewable four-year scholarships to graduates of Dover, Millbrook, Stissing Mountain and Webutuck high schools to help them on their pathway to success. To date, 19 students like Vicky have received up to \$5,000 per year thanks to the extraordinary generosity of donors and the tireless work of local community members who sit on the fund's advisory committee.

The Northeast Dutchess Scholarship Fund launched in 2014 with a \$100,000 gift from Nancy Perkins of Millbrook. She made donations to the fund's endowment every year prior to her death in 2022. Nancy and her late husband, George, were always discreet benefactors of the region through their philanthropy. "We do as much as necessary. Family giving was a part of life. We've always helped, and felt an obligation to give back," Perkins previously said. As part of her estate planning, she left a bequest to BTCF to establish a new donor advised fund that continues to support these scholarships, as well as numerous nonprofits in northeast Dutchess County.

"We are so pleased to continue the foundational charitable giving that Nancy did personally and quietly for so many years," said David Stack, who is an advisor of Perkins's donor advised fund. "She was deeply committed to strengthening this community and did so in so many ways. Her longtime and anonymous support for the Northeast Dutchess Scholarship Fund was of special importance to her, and it is our privilege to continue that today."

Robert Wilder of Stanfordville made two substantial gifts totaling \$200,000 in 2021 and 2022 to ensure that 10 area students will receive funding throughout their four years of college. His generosity doubled the amount of awards offered since the scholarship's inception. "Education provides the tools, life skills and self-discipline to help kids get better jobs and be better citizens," he said after making his first donation.

Webutuck graduate Carrissa Whitehead received a Wilder-funded scholarship last year to study math at Columbia University. "My goal of becoming a mathematics professor will take many years of school, as I need to obtain a Ph.D. This will lower the number of hours I will need to work during my studies and allow me to have more time to gain experiences through internships," she said. "I am truly grateful for your support." ■



(Continued from cover)

the \$3M from Gov. Ned Lamont's office, which, coupled with a \$1.3M startup grant provided by FCH, made the construction of the new center possible. March 3 marked the official groundbreaking for the Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington's newest location in North Canaan, Conn. Construction is slated for completion by January 2024; Community Health and Wellness Center's other two facilities are located in Winsted and Torrington.

The new facility will be a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that delivers integrated primary and behavioral health services and substance abuse treatment in areas with limited access to affordable healthcare, regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

"Nancy Heaton and the board of FCH recognized the critical need for access to healthcare services in the region and worked for years to help bring the partners together to make it happen," said Joanne Borduas, CEO of Community Health and Wellness, who underscored FCH's commitment to sustain the center over time through networking connections and fundraising efforts.

"All of our work is done in partnership with community leaders and organizations, and this was no exception," said Heaton. She also pointed out the importance of working with what she calls community assets, which include governmental institutions, nonprofits, libraries, and public and private schools, "that already exist here and contribute to the underlying conditions that improve health."

In 2003, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation played the leading role in establishing FCH as a nonprofit, enabling it to receive the assets from the sale of Sharon Hospital. In keeping with Connecticut law, all proceeds from the sale of a not-for-profit hospital to a for-profit organization must remain in the charitable sector through the creation of a "conversion" foundation. As a supporting organization, FCH receives investment, financial, and administrative services from BTCF, and the two entities often collaborate on health-related grantmaking. The public charity status this relationship confers has enhanced the ability of FCH to bring additional resources into the community. Currently valued at over \$26 million, FCH is Berkshire Taconic's largest fund under management.

At this auspicious juncture, BTCF is grateful to partner with Heaton, who has been tenacious in realizing her vision, and the entire FCH team, who work tirelessly to strengthen our community and leave an enduring impact.

"The purpose, strategy, and leadership demonstrated by FCH over the years have made our communities stronger and more resilient," BTCF President Peter Taylor said, highlighting the real takeaway: "Access to quality healthcare underlies quality of life and progress on other critical issues—from educational attainment and economic opportunity to community engagement—that our respective organizations

*"Access to quality healthcare underlies quality of life and progress on other critical issues—from educational attainment and economic opportunity to community engagement—that our respective organizations share a commitment to advance. The region and BTCF are fortunate to have FCH as an effective partner."*

—Peter Taylor,  
BTCF President



Nancy Heaton with Dr. John P. Charde of Lakeville, Conn., former FCH board chair.

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*The Foundation for Community Health (FCH) is a Type I supporting organization of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF), Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley, and Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation.*

**ON THE COVER:** Groundbreaking for Community Health and Wellness Center in North Canaan, Conn., on March 3, 2023. Joanne Borduas, CEO of Community Health and Wellness; Nancy Heaton, President & CEO of the Foundation for Community Health, which provided a startup grant of \$1.3M; and Representative Maria Horn, who worked with the Governor's office to secure a \$3M bond for construction.





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## Regional Roundup



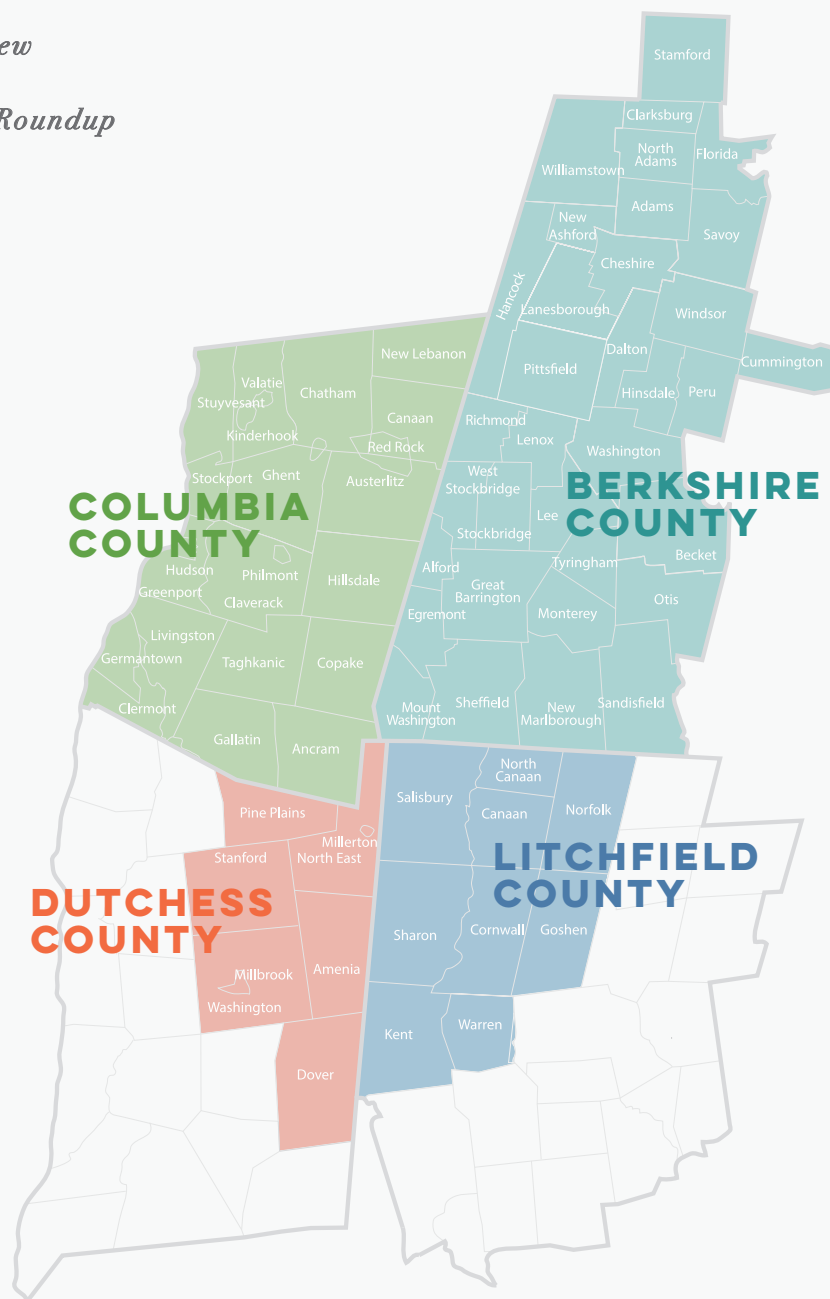
*Scan to view  
expanded  
Regional Roundup*

BTCF's board welcomes Chatham's Tanu Kumar, who leads a consulting practice that supports clients working to build more equitable and inclusive communities. She also serves on the boards and committees of Kite's Nest in Hudson and the Columbia County Sanctuary Movement.

Former BTCF board member and Canaan, NY resident Suzette Brooks Masters' report, "Imagining Better Futures for American Democracy," published by the Democracy Funders Network, is a call to imagine what democracy could become and bring ideas for better futures to fruition with limited resources.

Rock Steady Farm, which is supported by BTCF's Bridging Divides, Healing Communities initiative and the Northeast Dutchess Fund, premiered the screening of "Pollinate!," a documentary chronicling the apprenticeship of 11 queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and people of color farmers.

The NEDCorps Coalition for Youth Success, part of BTCF's School-to-Work initiative, recently held a meeting that focused on youth transportation and integrating youth services within the greater school community.



BTCF has committed over \$900,000 to eight organizations so far through our partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to administer the CARES Act Community Development Block Grant Food Security Program in Berkshire County.

Our Arts Build Community initiative awarded over \$150,000 to 22 arts and culture organizations in Berkshire County that are testing new ideas to increase community engagement through the arts and creative process.

The Northwest Corner Fund is supporting the Region One School District's summer school program for middle school youth, including funding to support transportation costs. Activities include STEAM projects, agriculture, athletics, arts and music.

Supported by BTCF's Community Fund and donor advised fundholders, the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity helped 11 towns—including Norfolk, Salisbury, and Sharon—apply for earmarked Community Project Funds.