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SPRING 2025

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IMPACT

The difference we make in our communities

Northwest Village School Celebrates Milestone

40+ Years of Serving Students and Their Families

COMMUNITY

Wheeler is a *USA TODAY* Top Workplace

High Marks for Strong Culture

HEALTH

Cigna Group Foundation

Expanding Access to Health Care

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Northwest Village School Celebrates Key Milestone: 40+ Years of Serving Students and Their Families

This year, Wheeler celebrates the 40th anniversary of the construction of Northwest Village School (NVS), but its delivery of therapeutic education services nearly spans our entire 55-plus-year history.

Known in the early 1970s as the Therapeutic Education Unit (TEU), Wheeler's program served students from K-12 with behavioral health, academic, social, and other challenges who were referred by public school districts. Employing a transdisciplinary model, the NVS team of teachers, paraprofessionals, behavioral health, and speech and occupational therapy clinicians worked collaboratively, across their disciplines, to help students thrive in school and beyond.

This approach continues.

Fast forward to 1983. With visionary guidance of Wheeler leadership, the organization planned for a major expansion of the Northwest Drive building and a capital campaign to support the effort. Construction was completed in time for the opening of the 1985 school year. The new 24,000-square-foot wing housed 13 state-of-the-art classrooms, along with space for a lunchroom, the library, meeting rooms, and offices.

In 2013, a renovation and expansion project—made possible by a $2-million grant from the State of Connecticut, as well as contributions from private foundations, corporations, individuals, and Wheeler—further enhanced the school's learning environment. The project included a sensory-sensitive environment with engaging classrooms and additional space for smaller group learning; an expanded Media Center and new Literacy Lab; cutting-edge educational software and technology, including Smart Boards in every classroom; and a 10,000-square-foot multipurpose center housing a gym and performance stage.

Today, the school continues to adapt to changes in the special education landscape.

Wheeler President and Chief Executive Officer, Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, is both proud of NVS's past and optimistic about its future. "This milestone is a testament to the hard work, vision, and creativity of organizational leaders and staff who came before us, as well as the commitment of our communities to provide students with positive learning experiences and preparation for life," she said. "We believe in the unique potential of all youth, and our team will continue to find innovative ways to work together to engage students in academics, build their confidence, and help them move forward in their learning."

READ MORE STORIES

To access this and other stories in this issue, visit: **WheelerHealth.org/Impact** or scan this QR code.

COMMUNITY

Wheeler Named *USA TODAY* Top Workplace

Wheeler has announced it has earned the 2025 *USA TODAY* Top Workplaces award. Issued by Energage, a purpose-driven organization that develops solutions to build and brand Top Workplaces, the program has a 15-year history of surveying more than 20 million employees and recognizing the top organizations across 60 markets for regional Top Workplaces awards.

USA TODAY Top Workplaces celebrates organizations with 150 or more employees that have built great cultures. Over 42,000 organizations were invited to participate in the survey. Winners are chosen based solely on employee feedback gathered through an employee engagement survey, issued by Energage.

Results are calculated by comparing the survey's research-based statements, including 15 Culture Drivers that are proven to predict high performance against industry benchmarks.

"We are honored to receive this amazing recognition, as it reflects the talent, energy, and feedback of our team," said Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, Wheeler president and chief executive officer. "We are steadfast in our commitment to nurturing a highly engaged workplace where innovation is encouraged, and employees can grow and thrive."

FACT: Wheeler received its first *Hartford Courant* Top Workplace designation in 2013 and was recognized with this distinction for a total of eight times.

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

- The organization's **40th Annual Golf Classic** happens **September 17** at the **Country Club of Farmington**, offering a great day of golf, while **benefiting individuals and families** in our care.
- Wheeler recently honored **four donors** for outstanding support of its mission at the organization's **14th Annual Hands & Hearts** event.
- Wheeler continued to expand its **Farm to Family** program, providing **fresh produce** to patients through our **five community health centers**. Thanks to this innovative partnership with **Holcomb Farm**, more than **2,600** patients were served in the past year.
- Wheeler's **Community Support for Families (CSF)** program recently celebrated its 13th year. Funded by the **Connecticut Department of Children and Families**, this voluntary program **assists families** in strengthening natural and community support systems to maintain **safe and healthy home** environments.

HEALTH

Cigna Group Foundation Expands Health Care Access

With a new $250,000, multiyear grant, The Cigna Group Foundation is expanding access to health care in Hartford through a partnership with Wheeler Health.

Wheeler will use the grant to staff and deploy a new mobile health van for community outreach and education, preventive health screenings, primary care, chronic disease management, and health insurance navigation to Hartford residents at dozens of locations throughout the city. This van joins Wheeler's larger vehicle, unveiled in 2022.

"With support from The Cigna Group Foundation, we are meeting the residents of Hartford where they are in their health, and where they are in the community," said Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, Wheeler president and chief executive officer, and a Hartford native. "We'll be there in parks, community centers, housing complexes, libraries, parking lots, or churches. This is truly community-based health care."

FACT: Since 2022, more than 250 people were served through Wheeler's first and larger Mobile Health Center.

HEALTH ROUNDUP

- Wheeler received a **$600,000 federal grant** as part of a $4.2-million funding package distributed to seven community health centers across Connecticut. This funding is aimed at **expanding access** to vital mental health, behavioral health, primary care, and substance use disorder services throughout the state. This grant supports Wheeler's **same-day assessments** and **rapid access to follow-up care.**
- Since its inception in July 2024, our **mobile food pantry**, made possible through a partnership with **Connecticut Foodshare** and Wheeler's Family Health & Wellness Center in **New Britain**, has served about **2,100 people.**
- Wheeler's **Family Health & Wellness Centers** offer **immediate** access to **chiropractic care**. Individuals with HUSKY insurance do not need a referral. Non-patients welcome.

CARE

Healing at Home: Wheeler's MST and MDFT Programs

Every day, across the state, dozens of Wheeler clinicians step out of their cars, ring a doorbell, and change lives in the most intimate setting, a family's home.

Through that therapeutic care, says Deb Batsie-Hernandez, LMFT, senior director of community in-home services, families often discover they already have the tools needed to heal and grow.

"Our families overcome so much," she says. "Parents love their kids, and we sometimes help them find that love. Our families are resilient, through the worst."

The youth served may have long histories of substance use, behavioral health concerns, and more, often with involvement in the judicial system, multigenerational trauma, long-standing truancy, or poverty.

"We are focused on creating a network of care with schools, community partners, and everyone you can imagine to keep children safe and supported in their communities," says Victoria Prestileo, LCSW, director of community in-home services.

FACT: Wheeler's first Multisystemic Family Therapy program was launched in 2001.

CARE ROUNDUP

- Thanks to our **corporate partners** and **Wheeler staff**, we filled **650 holiday requests** for children and their families this past holiday season. Our friends at **Americold Logistics** in Plainville donated toys and clothing to match specific requests. Our partners at **Mott Corporation** filled more than **200 holiday requests** from our Foster Care program, and **Amazon.com** provided more than 30 boxes of toys.
- Wheeler's **Multisystemic Family Therapy-Building Stronger Families (MST-BSF)** program turned 20 this year. This intensive, home-based treatment **serves families** involved with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) protective services.
- Wheeler leaders **Dru Breslav, LCSW, senior director,** and **Elisabeth Cannata, Ph.D., vice president,** contributed to a chapter in the book ***Child Neglect, Inequity, & Poverty: Practice Innovations, Concrete Resources, and Justice***.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wheeler
COMMUNITY | HEALTH | CARE

We're in a season of milestones and achievements, including our receipt of a *USA TODAY* Top Workplaces award and 40th anniversary of the construction of Northwest Village School. Both remind us of how far we've come and what can be achieved with vision, hard work, and the support of our communities, including all of you.

This issue features a story about the creation of Northwest Village School, and how we've continued to meet the therapeutic needs of students throughout Connecticut. We also highlight the amazing work of our MDFT/MST clinicians, who work tirelessly to bring hope and healing to individuals and families in their homes and communities. We share news about a grant from The Cigna Foundation, which generously supports our second (and more compact) mobile health center, and we acknowledge the hundreds of individuals, corporations, and communities whose kindness and generosity helped brighten the holiday season for our patients.

We're looking forward to the future and to meeting the needs of our communities. In an especially challenging environment for community health centers and health care in general, we are thankful to have you by our side. We appreciate your support. Thank you for helping us make an impact.

Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA
President and Chief Executive Officer

Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA

PLEDGE

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
YOUR support, YOUR commitment, YOUR vision can change, and literally save, lives.

Yes! I want to support:

Basic Needs Fund ..... $ _____
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Other ..... $ _____
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