

Restoring Hope, Repairing Harm: Wheeler's Diversion First Program

A three-year grant to Wheeler from the Connecticut Department of Children and Families will support an innovative, new program to divert youth from the juvenile justice system and help them avoid formal incarceration and the lifelong barriers of criminal records.

"Diversion First offers a meaningful alternative to incarceration for youth, ages 10 to 17, involved primarily in low-level offenses," said Kimberly M. Nelson, LCSW, chief program officer, Wheeler. "By taking different paths to accountability and repair, we can reduce repeat offenses, lower costs, and prevent the long-reaching, negative impacts of a formal criminal record."

The six-month voluntary program utilizes the Youth Diversion Team (YDT) model, Trauma-Informed Restorative Diversion, a restorative justice model that focuses on the accountability of harm and addresses a youth's underlying needs. Key elements of the program include early intervention to move youth away from formal court processing during minor or first-time incidents; mental health counseling, substance use education, mentoring, and family support instead of detention; and community-based service, restorative justice, or educational classes with a special focus on individual accountability.

Referrals are accepted from law enforcement, Juvenile Court, and schools for misdemeanor offenses pre- or post-arrest.

"Ultimately, we are looking for ways to encourage youth to take responsibility for their actions and to learn from the consequences of their decisions," said Nelson. "We will provide them with opportunities to learn and grow so that they can live productive lives."

The program serves youth and families in the following cities and towns:

Site 1: Easton, Monroe, New Canaan, Wilton, Bethany, Milford, North Branford, North Haven, and Woodbridge

Site 3: Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Canton, New Fairfield, Redding, Sherman, Roxbury, Warren, Washington, Oxford, Prospect, and Wolcott

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COMMUNITY

Wheeler Leaders Making A Difference in Communities

Wheeler leaders from every corner of the organization are making a difference for teams, communities, and the individuals and families we serve.

Wheeler's Senior Director of Health Center Operations in Waterbury, Amanda Pratte, MBA, recently joined local healthcare leaders for a panel discussion with the Waterbury Regional Chamber's Health Services Day. Members of Amanda's team, Adilsa Lopez, integrated care supervisor, and Joseph McKeon, lead peer specialist, were also part of the Chamber's 2026 Leadership Greater Waterbury program, a 10-week personal and career development program.

Lisa Roth, DHA, senior director of health center operations in New Britain, received a 2026 Women in Leadership Award from the YWCA New Britain, which recognizes outstanding women in the community who demonstrate compassion, integrity, and strength, and who make meaningful impacts in their workplaces, schools, or communities. Since 2021, Lisa has led Wheeler's Family Health & Wellness Center through significant growth, overseeing additional elements of care and outreach, including a bi-weekly food distribution program in partnership with Connecticut Foodshare, supported by corporate volunteers from Mott Corporation and M&T Bank. Since the inception of the program, in 2024, nearly 6,800 individuals have been served.



Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, President and Chief Executive Officer, recently received an array of awards and forms of recognition. She was named to the *Hartford Business Journal 2026 Power 25 Healthcare List* for leading Wheeler through current healthcare environment changes and challenges.

This past spring, Wheeler received the 2026 Healthcare Award from the West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Inc. and the 2026 Employer Partner of the Year award from the Urban League of Greater Hartford, which recognized Wheeler for its Top Workplace recognition and "embracing inclusive ideas where employees feel like they belong and the work for justice is ongoing."

Sabrina also received the Connecticut Certification Board's (CCB) Kathleen Whelan-Ulm Women's Leadership Award, named for the one-time president of the board of directors of CCB, and given to respected women in leadership roles.

In May, Sabrina delivered the 2026 Graduate Commencement Address at the University of Hartford, sharing inspiration for leading in challenging times. Her message centered on anchoring to purpose, building up the people around you, self-compassion, and "standing at your podium" to make things better. She also encouraged graduates to lead with integrity, and bring empathy and courage into every room they enter.

HEALTH

Comprehensive Care at 91 Northwest Drive

For nearly 54 years, Wheeler's 91 Northwest Drive location has provided comprehensive, compassionate care to residents of Plainville and surrounding towns. This site has undergone a series of renovations and expansion in care to best meet the needs of patients.

Today, people of all ages can access patient-centered, integrated care at this location, including quick scheduling for child behavioral health, as well as walk-in services during designated hours; comprehensive primary care; and linkages to other services in the community. There are also weekly groups to support patients through the lifespan, including teen Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Young Adult Transitions groups, adult mental health and substance abuse groups, and a Wellness group for ages 55 and older. In addition, every Wednesday from 1 to 4 pm, patients have access to free, fresh produce through our Farm to Family program, made possible through an innovative partnership with Holcomb Farm.

Visit us, WheelerHealth.org/Plainville.



HEALTH ROUNDUP

- Senior Director of School-based Behavioral Health Services, **Sarah Quirk, LMFT**, recently appeared on **NBC Connecticut's CT Live**, where she discussed **grief in children and adolescents** and resources to help.
- Through a grant from the **Connecticut Department of Agriculture**, Wheeler expanded its **Farm to Family program**, increasing patient access to locally grown vegetables and fruit. The **$100,000** award through the **Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) grant** program supports the purchase and distribution of **Connecticut-grown produce** at Wheeler's federally qualified health centers in Bristol, Hartford, New Britain, Plainville, and Waterbury. Since 2018, Wheeler has partnered with **Holcomb Farm CSA** and **other Connecticut farms** to integrate food access into healthcare.
- Wheeler's **Walk with Me program** continues, thanks to a **$110,000 grant** from the **Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation.**

CARE

REACH Program Now Serves Non-Parenting Women

Wheeler's REACH Program (Recovery, Engagement, Access, Coaching & Healing) now serves non-parenting women with substance use disorder (SUD). Launched in 2024, the program served pregnant and parenting women with SUD and their families, providing access to recovery resources, behavioral health, primary care, and additional supports.

"This expansion of services allows us to reach even more individuals with substance use disorder," said Kelly Bergeron, LMFT, director, Community, Crisis and Prevention. "These individuals may or may not become parents at some point in their lives, but more crucially is the idea that we're helping more women to find hope and support."

Funded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services through a multi-year grant, the program provides outreach, engagement, short-term case management, and recovery support resources to pregnant and parenting women with substance use or co-occurring disorders as well as their partners, and other immediate parenting family or natural support who have been affected by substance use, either personally, or by the use of the child's parent.

Learn more at WheelerHealth.org/reach.



CARE ROUNDUP

- Wheeler received a **$322,162 grant** from the **Department of Developmental Services** to fund the **Children's Community Clinical Response** program, which addresses the needs of **children with intellectual disability** experiencing significant disruption in the family home or returning to the family home after a hospitalization.
- A **three-year, $1.6 million grant** from the **State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division** will support a new program called **Adolescent Sexual Treatment and Education Program (ASTEP)**, an in-home and psychoeducation service for **adolescents** who have displayed inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviors.
- For the **third year** in a row, an **anonymous donor** is supporting **daycare and summer camp costs** for **Wheeler Health employees.** The gift provided approximately **two-dozen $1,000 stipends** for eligible and selected employees, **as well as** the equivalent of the employee portion of the **FICA payroll tax** to maximize the benefit for recipients.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wheeler
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At a time marked by significant changes and an increasingly complex operating environment, I am heartened, not only by our ongoing, demonstrated commitment to our values and delivery of high-quality care, but our ability to expand our care in response to the dynamic needs of our communities.

In this issue, you'll read about an innovative new program made possible through a $3.59 million grant from the Department of Children and Families, which offers youth with minor, first-time offenses a meaningful alternative to incarceration. We also highlight organizational leaders who have been instrumental in charting our course through successes and challenges, and who have been recognized by the communities they work so hard to serve. Our growth and evolution at our first Wheeler site at 91 Northwest Drive are also featured in this issue, along with new developments in our REACH (Recovery, Engagement, Access, Coaching & Healing) program, which now serves non-parenting women with substance use disorder (SUD).



You play a tremendous role you in our ability to do our work and deliver care to those most in need. Thank you for your support of our mission and for understanding the importance of what we do, especially now.

Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA
President and Chief Executive Officer

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..... $ _____
Basic Needs Fund, Northwest Village School..... $ _____
Other ..... $ _____
Enclosed is my total gift of..... $ _____

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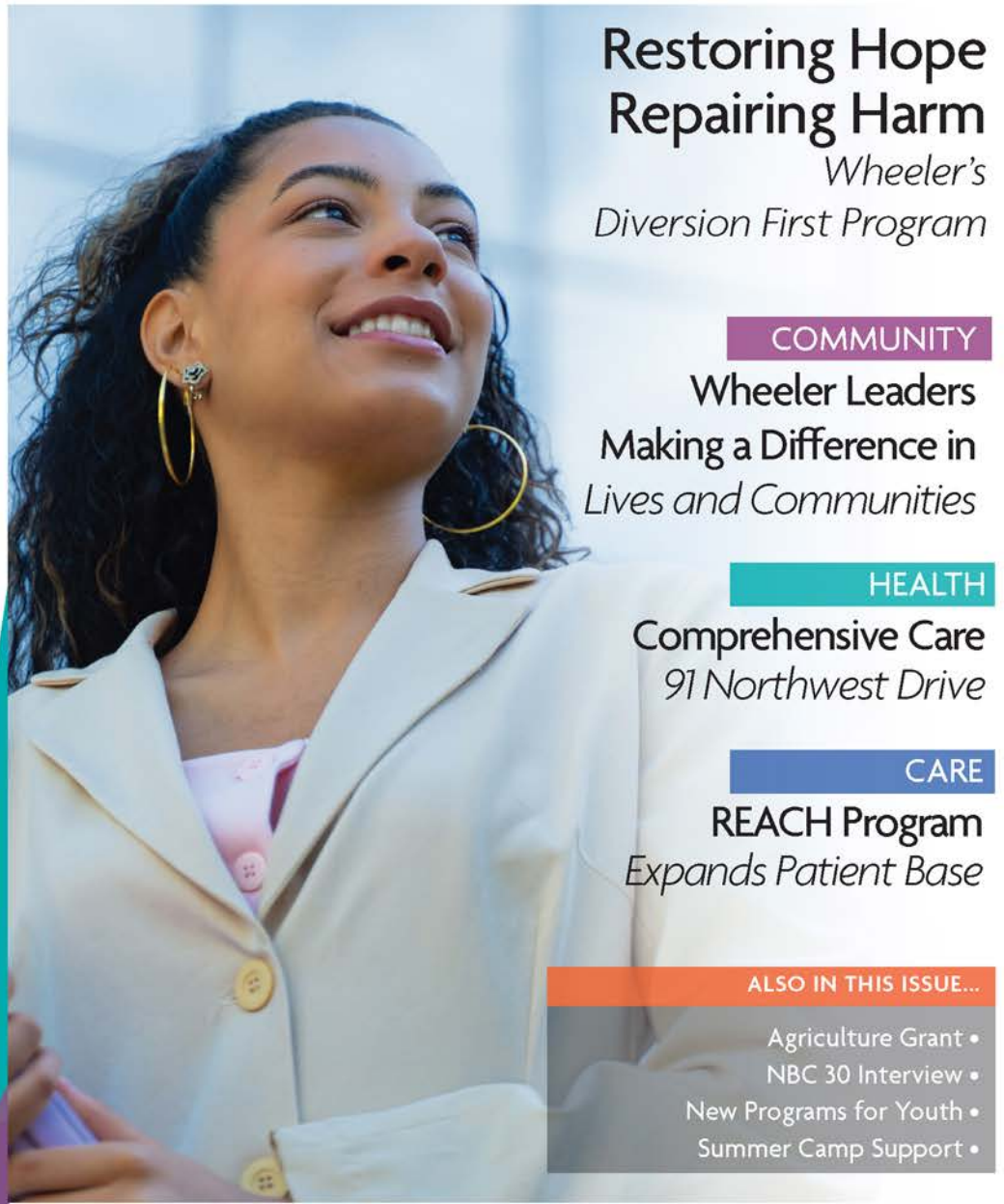
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SUMMER 2026

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IMPACT

The difference we make in our communities



Restoring Hope Repairing Harm

Wheeler's Diversion First Program

COMMUNITY

Wheeler Leaders Making a Difference in *Lives and Communities*

HEALTH

Comprehensive Care *91 Northwest Drive*

CARE

REACH Program *Expands Patient Base*

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