



Foodshare Fridays Deliver Dignity and Hope

Thousands of New Britain
Residents Served

COMMUNITY

New Opioid Funding
Targets Access, Prevention
Naloxone Cabinets Featured

HEALTH

Expanded Mobile Health Care
In Bristol, New Britain

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Providing a Path Forward

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IMPACT

The difference we make in our communities



FEATURE STORY



Foodshare Fridays Deliver Dignity, Hope in New Britain

Every other Friday, something powerful happens in an empty parking lot at Wheeler’s Family Health & Wellness Center at 40 Hart Street in New Britain. A Connecticut Foodshare Mobile Food Pantry truck pulls in, greeted by a waiting, well-oiled machine of Wheeler staff and community volunteers.

This isn’t just a food distribution. It’s a lifeline. Launched in July 2024, the partnership between Wheeler and Connecticut Foodshare has provided nutritious food to nearly 3,200 people in New Britain, where approximately 16 percent of residents face food insecurity. Bread, produce, dairy, and frozen staples are distributed with compassion and care.

The initiative was born from a single, mission-centered conversation between Wheeler President and CEO Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, and Connecticut Foodshare President and CEO Jason Jakubowski, MPA, two leaders and organizations with a shared commitment to meeting people where they are.

That spark ignited a deeper collaboration led on the ground by Lisa Roth, Wheeler’s Senior Director of Health Center Operations in New Britain. Working closely with community partners like South Church, Roth has made Foodshare Fridays not just possible, but profoundly impactful.

“When two strong organizations share a mission and meet a community need head-on, magic happens,” said Trocchi. “We owe this success to the sweat equity, heart, and soul of our staff and the selfless spirit of our volunteers. They teach us the true meaning of the word ‘philanthropy,’ the love of mankind.”

“New Britain has a special place in my heart, and making sure that our neighbors here in the city and across the state have the food they need is something that Connecticut Foodshare is committed to providing,” adds Jakubowski. “It’s strong community partnerships like this one with Wheeler that make this work possible.”

Each Foodshare Friday is about more than food—it’s about connection, compassion, and community. Roth coordinates children’s activities through 2-4-1 Sports, while Connecticut’s Read to Grow mobile library offers books to young attendees. The events have become multigenerational touchpoints of support, dignity, and care.

Corporate volunteers from M&T Bank and Mott Corporation help manage the flow by handing out food tickets, organizing lines, directing traffic, and even carrying food to the cars of older adults. Wheeler staff from New Britain and across the organization step in, adding their own energy and presence.

“When you nourish a community, you’re feeding more than people,” Roth says. “You’re feeding hope.”



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COMMUNITY

Statewide Grant to Support Response to Opioid Emergencies

With new, two-year funding from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Wheeler will introduce and administer a statewide program to increase public access to naloxone to prevent overdose deaths caused by opioids. The program will provide a wide array of community partners across the state with naloxone cabinets, small boxes containing four to eight doses to be used in emergency overdose situations.

“Accidental overdose deaths have continued to decrease in the state since 2021, however, there is still a significant amount of work to be done,” said Rita Demo, MPH, LMFT, vice president of Community, Crisis, and Prevention. “We are hopeful that these cabinets will play a role in those efforts.”

This funding also supports Wheeler’s expansion of Change the Script, an awareness campaign to educate the public about the risks of opioids, naloxone, and safe medication practices, including proper storage and disposal of medication. Two mobile outreach vans are also part of this effort.



CHANGE the SCRIPT

DrugFreeCT.org

FACT: In FY 2025, Wheeler’s Change the Script effort distributed 64,866 campaign materials to Connecticut residents.

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

- Wheeler’s **Southington Community Health Outreach Program** received a grant in the amount of **\$116,422** from the Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust of the **Main Street Community Foundation**. Now in its 10th year, this project facilitates **access to behavioral health care** for Southington residents. The project employs a three-tiered approach, including **outreach and health education**; **system navigation assistance**; and efforts to reduce **barriers to care** such as child care concerns, and others.
- For the second year, an **anonymous donor** supported **childcare and summer camp costs** for Wheeler Health employees. The gift, increased from last year, provided **\$1,000 stipends** for Wheeler employees.
- Wheeler’s **40th Annual Golf Classic** takes place on **September 17** at the **Country Club of Farmington** to benefit the basic needs of the individuals and families in our care. Since its inception in **1986**, this much-loved event has raised more than **\$1.4 million**.

CARE

The Path Forward: Evaluation And Assessment Services

Knowing what a child needs to thrive in school or the community is obvious, but sometimes this “knowing” is harder to discern. According to Sara Schoonover, Psy,D, director, an evaluation process might offer the best path forward.

A clinician with Wheeler for a decade, Sara says there are features that distinguish the organization’s approach, including the involvement of multiple evaluators in the process. Wheeler offers two key evaluation programs that help identify the unique needs of youth and young adults: Autism Diagnostic Evaluation Program and Diagnostic Assessment and Referral Team (DART).

Sara appreciates every aspect of her work, but she is partial to direct testing and evaluation.

“Perhaps the most rewarding part is when families describe the impact of the program on their loved one,” said Sara. “I am always heartened to know that we are seen as ‘kind’ and ‘caring,’ that our evaluations are effective, and that we make a meaningful difference in the lives of the families we serve.”



FACT: Wheeler’s Autism Diagnostic Evaluation program began in 2016, and its DART program began more than 20 years ago. Both programs have served thousands of students and families across Connecticut.

CARE ROUNDUP

- Wheeler received more than **\$13 million** in funding over a three-year period from **State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division** for its **Explore** programs in Bristol, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, and New Britain, and **Alternative in the Community** programs in Bristol, Meriden, Middletown, and New Britain.
- Wheeler received a **\$10,000 grant** from the **United Way of West Central Connecticut** for its **Walk With Me** program in **Bristol** and **Plainville**. Walk with Me is an outpatient treatment track, funded by philanthropy and private foundation grants, for LGBTQ+ identifying people of all ages.
- Wheeler also received a **\$10,000 grant** from the **United Way of West Central Connecticut** to support its **Community Support for Families** program in **Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, and Plymouth**.

HEALTH

Wheeler Wins Top Workplace Health Care Award

Wheeler is a national 2025 Top Workplaces health care industry winner for the second year in a row.

Top Workplaces awards are based on feedback from a research-backed employee engagement survey, based on employee feedback compared to organizations across the nation. Approximately 500 Wheeler employees completed the 2025 survey. In March, Wheeler earned a national Top Workplaces award from *USA Today*. In 2024, Wheeler was named a *Hartford Courant* Top Workplace for the eighth time since 2013.

“Our colleagues at Wheeler are saving and changing lives every day,” said Wheeler President and CEO, Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA. “In the 2025 survey, our team clearly feels that our values guide their work daily. I couldn’t be more proud of this amazing organization and all that we accomplish together for the individuals we serve.”



FACT: Since the opening of Wheeler’s newest Family Health & Wellness Center at One Hope Street, Bristol in July of 2024, there’s been a 10% year-over-year increase in patient volume.

HEALTH ROUNDUP

- Wheeler received **\$3,500** from the **Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation** to expand **integrated health services** for underserved residents in **Bristol** and **New Britain** through its Mobile Family Health & Wellness van. This grant will support weekly outreach at two trusted sites: **Agape House** on Wednesdays and the **Root Center for Advanced Recovery** on Fridays.
- Wheeler Health has earned **The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval®** for **Behavioral Health Accreditation** in numerous programs by demonstrating continuous compliance with its performance standards.
- Wheeler’s **Farm to Family** program returned to Wheeler’s five community health centers, serving more than **950** individuals and families. The program is made possible through an innovative **partnership** with **Holcomb Farm**.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



We’ve enjoyed a dynamic, productive summer season here at Wheeler, delivering and expanding whole-person care and focusing on the needs of our communities.

Our cover story, which highlights our collaboration with Connecticut Foodshare, exemplifies our commitment to our communities. Since its inception, this program has provided nutritious food to more than 3,200 New Britain residents. This issue also highlights other kinds of community work, including expanded mobile health services in Bristol and New Britain, thanks to a grant from the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation; expansion of services to expectant mothers and new parents in Hartford; and continued efforts to prevent incidents of opioid overdose, with support from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.



All of this would not be possible without YOUR involvement and the dedication of our amazing team. Our recent receipt of the *Hartford Courant* Top Workplaces Health Care award underscores the amazing, meaningful work that we are able to do together.

Thank you for being a part of our community. In these times, especially, your support helps us to continue helping people who need us most.

Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA
Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA
President and Chief Executive Officer

PLEDGE

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

YOUR support, YOUR commitment, YOUR vision can change, and literally save, lives.

Yes! I want to support:

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

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 My gift is in memory of: _____
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Mail using the enclosed envelope to:
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 Bristol, CT 06010

Or scan this QR code to make a donation.

