



We recognize the courage it takes to come forward and humbly ask for help. Every homeless person is an individual facing tough economic times; and every hungry family has their own unique story.

Northwest Corner Gives – FISH is honored and thankful.....

Until July 31, FISH NWCT is joining nonprofits throughout the Northwest Corner in raising money for operational needs. This is an opportunity to make donations - large and/or small – to help the Northwest Corner power through the COVID – 19 pandemic. Northwest Corner Gives is an online giving platform created by the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation to help organizations build awareness and raise matching funds. FISH is raising funds for our \$40,000 goal. The Community Foundation has already matched 50% of our campaign goal through its Northwest Corner Gives: Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund. The Foundation will continue to match all gifts made on a dollar-for-dollar basis until we reach our goal!

If you choose to make a donation, and we possibly have met our goal, you may still donate and FISH will receive your gift. Please visit - www.northwestcornergives.org – and visit our FISH page. And special thanks already to the Lakeridge community for your huge effort to help us make our match, as well as the New York Sky Blues, Dymax, and several other wonderful donors supporting us in our Mission at FISH!



Ten Minutes With // THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FISH NWCT

Deirdre Houlihan DiCara

had spent 29 years as a professional in girl scouting, 23 of those as the executive director of the Girl Scouts of NWCT, until she was approached seven years ago to assume the leadership role at FISH NWCT—Friends in Service to Humanity—based in Torrington. A role she now realizes is her true life's calling. It seems that things have come full circle for this urban studies major from Wheaton College whose senior paper once delved into the homeless of Boston.



When the pandemic hit, what were your first thoughts? The moment they closed Italy and the market plummeted, I knew we were facing a world crisis. Immediately I thought how will we stay healthy on the front line, and keep our doors open at FISH to serve those who depend on us? How will I fund the organization? And my greatest fear is how will we keep the FISH Homeless Shelter staffed if illness enters?

How did you respond? We rearranged dorm rooms, created isolation areas, and developed protocols: “Team Stay Healthy”. We worked to keep up morale, and to deliver food services at the pantry. We are now stretched with the addition of those furloughed and those with families in need.

How have you received support from the community during the pandemic? So many heroes and angels have appeared during this pandemic! I use Facebook daily to report good deeds by folks who volunteer—some who provide three meals a day to the shelter. There are mask makers, health providers who helped rearrange the shelter sleeping areas and advised me on health and safety protocols, miraculous financial donors, friends and Food Rescue USA delivering groceries for the food pantry, hearts and rainbow pictures from children—so many are shining in their goodness and generosity! We are forever grateful.

How else can we help? Once the pandemic ends, I invite everyone to take my “grand” tour of FISH and to join me in our “Rally Day to End Hunger and Homeless in NWCT,” the Saturday before Thanksgiving. fishnwct.org —**MARY BETH LAWLOR**

How did your family influence you? My parents raised us in an idyllic country setting in Winchester surrounded by dogs, cats, bunnies, and ponies. They instilled in us a great sense of community and volunteerism.

What does FISH NWCT do? In the best of times, we maintain a 35 bed homeless shelter—last year serving 101 individuals. Our shelter residents receive meals, bedding, mental health and medical assistance, and GED classes if needed. They also receive assistance with job searches and vocational training. At the FISH

Food Pantry, we distribute enough food to provide 113,841 meals to 1,506 people.

What should we know about the homeless and food insecure in Litchfield County? Every homeless person is an individual facing tough economic times, and every hungry family has their own unique story. We at FISH NWCT see the very human challenges of families, individuals, and veterans facing life crises every day and now the fear of the Coronavirus. We strive to restore the well-being of those who are the most vulnerable and have the courage to humbly ask for help.