

**working together
to build pathways to
success for our youth**

THRIVEBY**25**

An initiative of Fairfield County's Community Foundation

our vision: help young adults in Fairfield County to Thrive by 25

We aim to help every young adult in Fairfield County to achieve independence by the age of 25. This means reaching self-sufficiency: securing a meaningful job, earning an income, finding affordable living quarters and being responsible for the daily tasks of living without needing to rely on parents, siblings, friends or the government.

As a foundation, our goal is to give all Fairfield County youth the opportunity to thrive by age 25 — no matter their family income, school district or zip code.

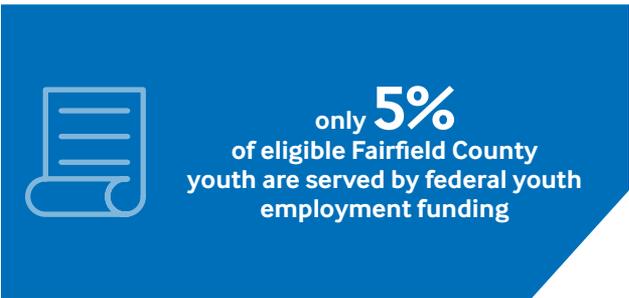
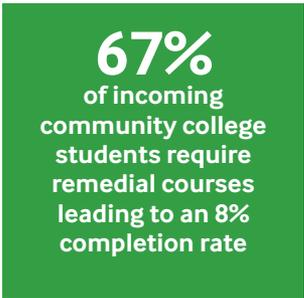
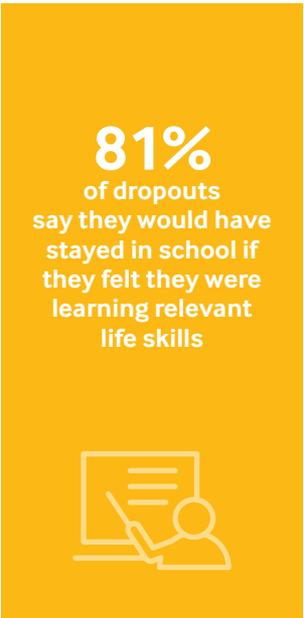
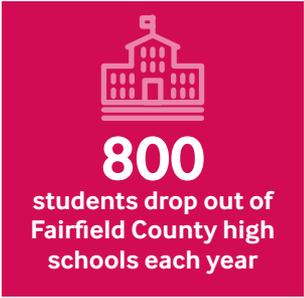
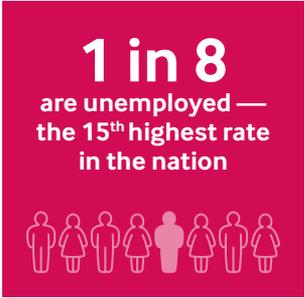


Meet Steven.

As a high school junior, his dream was to run his own auto body shop. College was the first step, but it was uncharted territory: his parents, who emigrated from Brazil as teenagers, didn't have the savings to fund his education. A scholarship program supported by Fairfield County's Community Foundation made it possible for Steven to attend UConn. After graduation, he took a job at PricewaterhouseCoopers

that gave him the knowledge and experience to dream big. Today, Steven is managing the data analytics team at Priceline.com, and is considering pursuing his MBA and launching his own company. Through a new Thrive by 25 initiative, *Pathways to Careers Fairfield County*, young people like Steven can receive on-the-job training with a clear path to long-term employment.

the numbers: youth, education and jobs in Fairfield County



the issue:

a workforce crisis

Today's employers are looking for workers with 21st century skills to compete in a global marketplace. Unfortunately, education and workforce development programs have lagged behind the need. More than half of all students who graduate from high school are not prepared for college coursework. Remedial courses cost the state of Connecticut an estimated

\$84 million per year, while college degree completion averages 52%.

Even students who navigate the complex maze of systems, services and programs to earn their college diploma have no guarantee of success. The average college graduate has \$27,000 in loan debt, and too many of them are unable to find a job in their chosen field.



Risk factors for youth unemployment and underemployment

- » Weak academic achievement
- » Dropping out of high school
- » Physical or learning disabilities
- » Lack of vocational counseling
- » Lack of college guidance counseling
- » Living in a high-crime neighborhood
- » No prior employment experience
- » Parents are not high school / college graduates
- » Parents do not have meaningful employment
- » Financial challenges that impact housing, food and transportation
- » Lack of means to enroll in college or vocational training

the opportunity:

the intersection of jobs and education

A growing body of research suggests that low-income teens who participate in after-school internships and summer jobs during high school are likely to have higher grades, better attendance, a greater likelihood of graduation, and a higher average salary throughout their lifetime.

Additionally, workforce development programs fill a need for employers seeking “middle skill” workers for industries like construction, health care or high-tech manufacturing. Middle-skill jobs — those requiring more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree — make up the largest share of Connecticut’s labor market, at 43%, and offer good wages and career advancement pathways.



supporting our young adults through transitions

Research shows that adolescence is still an important period of brain development, with full maturity occurring at age 25. We can increase the odds of adult success during these critical transition periods:

Middle school to high school.

We can prepare students to succeed in high school by providing one-on-one support to achieve academic success, talking with them about options for the future, and connecting them to coursework and opportunities for career exploration, such as summer job programs, internships and apprenticeships.

High school to college or vocational school.

We can significantly increase the odds of long-term financial success by helping students to identify areas of opportunity, choose a course of study, navigate the application process, and create networks of peers, employers, business owners and professors.

Higher education to the workforce.

We can support young adults in taking the first steps towards a fulfilling career by providing information about career pathways, access to interviewing and resume writing workshops, and fostering robust career programs, internships, apprenticeships and pathways to local job opportunities.



Young people are eager to find a way to thrive and do meaningful work. In youth forums sponsored by Fairfield County's Community Foundation, 95% of respondents ages 18 to 25 have some vision of what they want to achieve in a career, and many are interested in completing a master's degree.

the work:

creating a framework for success

To strengthen the network of support for youth workforce development, the Foundation is:

- » Partnering in a pilot program, *Pathways to Careers Fairfield County*, that connects "opportunity youth" and first generation college students with 18-month internships
- » Inviting young people to shape their future by joining our Thrive by 25 Ambassador Program
- » Working with local employers to identify the skills gap and create internships and apprenticeships
- » Partnering with educators, guidance counselors, mentors, coaches and faith leaders
- » Launching evidence-based programs to expand youth opportunity
- » Working with public officials to develop legislative policies that support workforce development
- » Supporting existing programs that are delivering strong results for young people.

Fostering opportunities for youth is an investment in our future. Strengthening career pathways increases the odds of finding meaningful jobs, earning good wages and taking the first steps toward home ownership. And when our "next generation" finds success, our whole community prospers. *Together we thrive.*

your part:

take steps to secure our future

This kind of work doesn't happen overnight. But as donors, business, nonprofit and community leaders, we have an opportunity to systematically lift up our community by supporting young adults at this intersection of jobs and education. No matter your role, there's a way you can get involved and help young adults to achieve success.

spread the word

Our work depends on community involvement, so help us to share our message through word of mouth and on social media. Together we thrive.

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#fairfieldcountythrives

make a donation

Contributions to our Community Leadership Fund will fuel Thrive by 25 and other community leadership work in Fairfield County.

fccfoundation.org/donate



connect us with young people

Whether you are a young person needing support, know in-need youth or work with a group of youth who can take part in a focus group, let us know.

We want to meet you.

hire a young person

If you are a local employer, take part in a summer youth employment or after-school internship program for high school and college students.

Partner with us.



As a trusted nonprofit partner, we bring together community leaders, business experts and philanthropists to solve our region's challenges. Our goal is to create a vital and inclusive community, where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

contact us

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