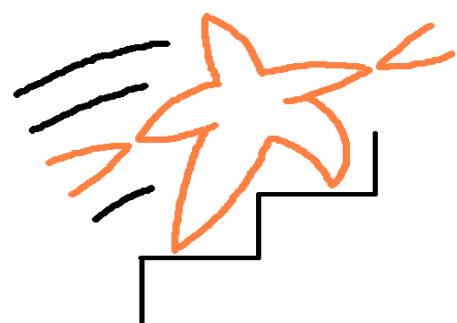
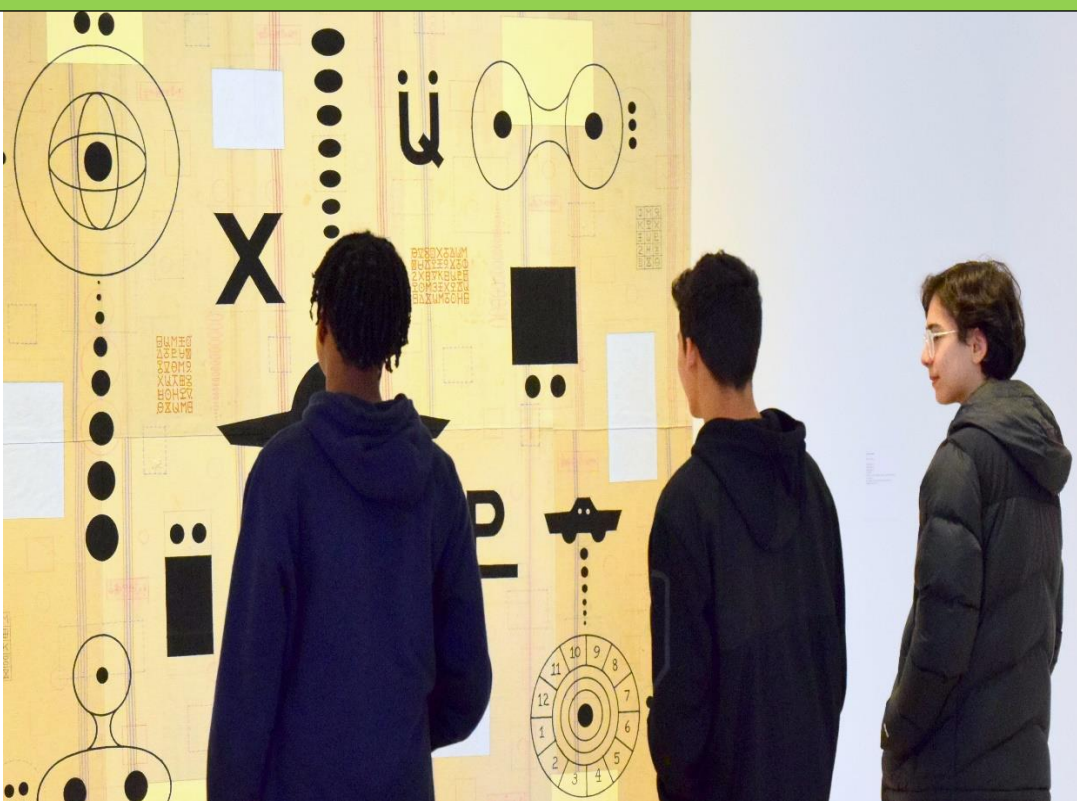


2022

Annual Report



Starfish
Connection

Congratulations to Maria Millan!

Building One Community presented the “Land of Opportunity Award to Maria Millan in recognition of her entrepreneurial spirit, hard work, and perseverance, in successful pursuit of her American Dream”.

Maria, emigrated to the USA from Spain with her husband, Antonio, and daughter, Natalia.

We believe Maria never sleeps. She works full time as an outreach coordinator for the city of Stamford, helping immigrant families find healthcare and access other critical services. In addition, she has served on the Board of Directors of Starfish Connection since its inception, mentored her own Starfish student, and runs our Starfish Parent Meetings program!



Congratulations to Our Four 2022 High School Grads!



Left to right:

Sherley Renodo, University of Saint Joseph; Jairon Herrera, Connecticut College;
Naimah Kaiser, UCONN/Stamford; and Nyshawn Johnson, UCONN/Storrs

On the Cover: Starfish High School students at The Aldrich Museum Tour 2022

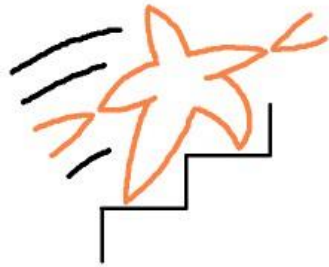
Why Starfish?

Once, as a man was walking along a beach, he noticed a boy off in the distance going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach. As the man approached, he saw that hundreds of starfish had been stranded on the sand as the tide retreated.

The man was struck by the apparent futility of the task. With so many starfish, many were sure to perish. But the boy continued to pick up the starfish one by one and place them back in the surf. As he came up to the boy, the man said, "There are miles of beach covered with starfish. You can't possibly make a difference." The boy stooped down, picked up one more starfish, and carefully placed it back in the ocean. Then he turned to the man and said,

"It Sure Made a Difference to That One!"

***BECOME A MENTOR
And Make a Difference!***



Starfish
Connection

Transforming Lives One at a Time



From the Executive Director

Dear Starfish Connection Friends and Supporters,

This has been a great year for Starfish Connection! Students went back to school full-time. They were also able to enjoy the full after school enrichment programs that Starfish offers, including theatre performances, cultural events, music instruction, teen circle counseling, college preparation, parent meetings and summer camp.

After a year in which state testing was cancelled due to COVID, Smarter Balanced state test results were available for the 2020-21 school year. As in past years, Starfish students exceeded the achievement of other high-needs students in Stamford and Connecticut in English/Language Arts and Math. On May 9th, we celebrated our sixth group of high school students who will each be attending a 4-year college of their choice in the fall, with honors and full scholarships. Our longitudinal mentoring approach has made it possible for a total of 18 students (since our inception in 2008) to achieve their dreams and begin their careers.

I want to dedicate this Annual Report to our Community Partners who provide us with grants and donations to stretch our budget so we can meet the needs of all our Starfish students.

Finally, I want to thank our mentors, team leaders, camp director, and music directors, for all their hard work and dedication, making sure our students have bright futures for themselves and their families for generations to come.



Sincerely,
Donna Wolff, PhD
Executive Director, Starfish Connection

Congratulations, 2022 Starfish Graduates!

Sherley Renodo with Isabel Katz, Mentor

Being part of a family that continues to learn and grow is important to me. Knowing Sherley and her family, being part of her life – to celebrate her accomplishments, to support her during her disappointments, to discuss her aspirations, and to help her navigate a plan to reach those goals – has built a bond between us that is family. Starfish Connection requires every student in the program to play a musical instrument, and that requirement has changed Sherley's life. She and I have attended many violin lessons, practices, and performances together. I enjoy listening to her play and hearing how her musical talent has developed, but she will tell you, if not for Starfish, she would never have realized her love of music and playing the violin. Sherley was awarded second place in her strings division at the Suzanne Culley Music Festival, a formal competition for music. Meeting Sherley and becoming part of her life has been a gift to me. Sherley created a Stamford Hospital PSA to encourage students to get vaccinated against COVID last year.



As a recent graduate of Westhill High School, Sherley will be pursuing her interests in healthcare attending University of Saint Joseph this fall with several scholarships.

Jairon Herrera with Fred Rossetti, Mentor

I first met Jairon in 2012 when he was a rising third grader joining the Starfish program. That first day when I picked him up for an outing, he had that deer in the headlights look about him and I only recently learned that he thought he was leaving his family and coming to live with me. That thought was soon thereafter dispelled when he was returned home safely after that afternoon. Over the next 10 years I have seen Jairon grow into a mature, talented, determined young man. He has a love for his family first, followed by a passion to help others and a curiosity in the environment. Jairon is the second oldest of four children in his family and has always been supportive to his siblings. Recently at his sister's Quinceañera, he participated in several dance routines. Jairon choreographed all the dances. Jairon started volunteer work in eighth grade for the social service agency Person to Person. For three years during high school, he volunteered at SoundWaters, teaching classes for children from schools in Fairfield County and conducting laboratory tests on the environment near Long Island Sound. During his junior year, Jairon landed his first job for the Mill River Park Collaborative, researching the park's data. Currently he is working at SoundWaters as a camp counselor and teaching everything from Scratch to Java at the Happy Code Club, a coding camp for children and hoping to pursue a degree in Environmental Sciences.



Jairon will be attending Connecticut College who awarded him their Shain Scholarship.

Nyshawn Johnson with Cliff Wells, Mentor

I first met Nyshawn in September 2014 as a quiet but eager to learn fifth grader who was identified by Starfish as a good student who with a little guidance could blossom.

What an understatement! During the past eight years, Nyshawn has participated in numerous Starfish sponsored activities and field trips that along with a very supportive family has contributed to his personal growth. Nyshawn was a competitor both in and out of the classroom. His passion for learning produced a strong academic track record where math and business were his favorite subjects. His competitive spirit was evident in his lacrosse, football, and weightlifting participation while attending Stamford High School. His activities outside of the classroom included spending quality time with family and, together, we enjoyed shooting pool, foosball, wooden mechanical puzzles, and a good burger.

It has been a real treat watching him develop into a fine young man full of energy, warmth, and a pleasing personality with a bright future.



Nyshawn will be attending UConn/Storrs in the fall to pursue a degree in either Business or Engineering.

Naimah Kaiser with Meg Mooar, Mentor

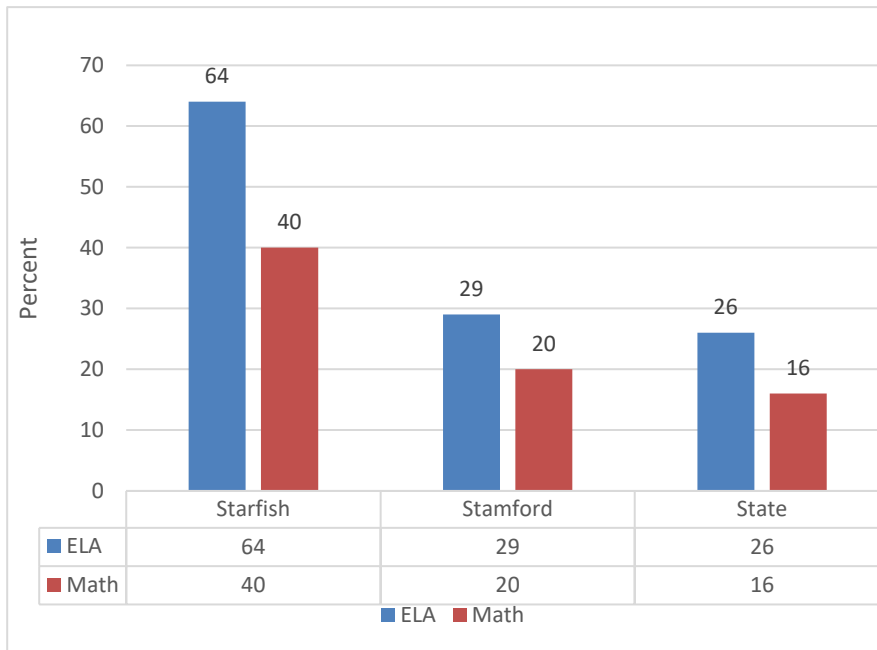
Naimah and I both agree that the last ten years have flown by. Perhaps because the Starfish team filled those years with exciting and memorable programs and activities. Naimah remembers boarding the city's sailboat for a cruise around the shore examining fish and crustaceans. I enjoyed the trip to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. These activities plus our shopping trips, restaurant experiences, movies and most importantly our mutual love of music, united us – an unbreakable friendship. During the years I watched Naimah grow with confidence. Always a strong student, I urged her to advocate for herself with her teachers as she navigated the ups and downs of academic and extracurricular activities. It is with great pride she has settled on a career in Finance. Her stellar grades and recommendations from her teachers won her acceptance into the prestigious three-year Academy of Finance program at Westhill.



This fall Naimah will continue her interest in the field of Finance at UConn/Stamford. She has been accepted into the Financial Honors program and awarded a full scholarship.

Academic Results

Percent of Students Demonstrating Proficiency in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math on the State Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC), Spring 2021, for Starfish vs Stamford vs State of Connecticut



Our latest SBAC scores show that Starfish Connection's students exceeded scores of other high-needs students in Stamford and the State in English/Language Arts and Math.

Our First HS Graduating Class of 2017: Where are they now?

(Left to right: Beverly Reyes, Michou Anilus, and Jonathan Carias)



Beverly graduated Tufts University 2021. Beverly works for Family Centers with the Stamford Cares Program as a Prevention Specialist. Mentor: Maria Millan

Michou graduated Tufts University in 2021 with a degree in engineering and earned a Master's degree at Tufts in 2022, where he taught Physics. He is now working in the field of electronic research and product development in California. Mentor: Carol Lilienthal

Jonathan Carias, graduated UConn Stamford studying economics in June 2022. He will be working at Littlejohn and Co. in Greenwich. This summer he plans to travel to Germany. Mentor: Kate Herman

Celebrating Our Starfish Milestones



Eighth Grade Rising Up Ceremony: Students receiving their new laptops from their mentors

Barbeque for our rising fifth graders entering middle school



Music Program 2022

This year, the in-school music program came back on-line, and so did our instructional music program. Our music activities are a very important pillar of our program. All new Starfish students select an instrument of their choice. Daily practice, and instrument care are mandatory and many of our students not only shine in school orchestras, but also take lessons after school.



Enrichment Activities 2022

Starfish exposes students to cultural and fun events. This year, elementary school children visited Longford's ice cream factory (below); middle school students made Christmas cookies and had a game day at the Ferguson Library. Our students attended two shows at The Palace Theatre during Christmas break and visited The Aldrich Museum in the spring.



Our Community Partners Help Us Get Ready for Camp and for School

Each year, the Selma Maisel Nursery school students fill backpacks with sundry and other items essential for Starfish students going to Camp Hi Rock sleep away camp. This helps us defray some of our camp costs. Photos courtesy of Tyler Sizemore, staff photographer for Stamford Advocate. See link for article: <https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/article/In-photos-Greenwich-preschoolers-fill-backpacks-17205194.php>



Back to School Backpacks 2022

The Residence at Summer Street community and staff accessed new school supplies from donors and filled and distributed nineteen new backpacks to our middle school students in time for school.



Financials: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2022

In addition to funds provided by the founders to cover all business expenses, Starfish Connection received financial support during the fiscal year from local foundations, companies, and individuals.

2022 INCOME

Grants	\$ 49,250.00
Founders' Donation	\$ 10,000.00
Individual Gifts	\$ 35,844.33
Interest	\$ 45.24

TOTAL INCOME **\$ 95,139.57**

2022 EXPENSES

Program Expenses

Summer Enrichment	\$ 19,752.08
After-School Enrichment	\$ 10,698.39
Group Enrichment	\$ 11,081.98
College Prep	\$ 200.00
Computers	\$ 9,362.52
Starfish Supplies	\$ 4,236.76

Subtotal **\$ 55,331.73**

Business Expenses

Insurance	\$ 2,657.00
Postage and Mailing	\$ 553.48
Other Operating Expenses	\$ 4,375.20

Subtotal **\$ 7,585.68**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$ 62,917.41**



High School Team Leaders, Jami Lo and Margaret Gray beautifully wrap brand new Mac Air laptops and accessories for our four 2022 High School graduates.

Starfish Connection is an all-volunteer organization. We do not incur any staffing or building costs. Business expenses are paid in full by the Founders' donation and all individual donations and grants go directly to programming and supplies for Starfish students.

Contributions

Thank you to all our generous donors for their gifts this past year!

2022 CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION GRANTS

Betsy & Arthur Selkowitz Family Foundation
Claire L. Helsing Foundation
Credit Suisse
First County Bank Foundation
Grace J. Fippinger Foundation, Inc.
Herbert & Sarah M. Gibor Charitable Foundation

The Knobloch Fund at FCCF
Louis J. Casale Jr. Charitable Fund
Round Hill Community Church
Speedway Children's Charities, NH Chapter
St. Francis Episcopal Church
St. John's Community Foundation
Stamford Rotary Trust Fund

2022 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Anne Mochulsky, Balancing Act Financials
Atelier Constantin Popescu Music
The Ballet School, Stamford
Bartlett Arboretum
Beyond Limits
Bruce Museum
Thomas Cassone, Attorney at Law
Chelsea Piers
Crescendo Music
Curtain Call
David's Soundview Catering
Fairfield Pizza
Ferguson Library
Future 5
Girl Scouts of CT
Greenwich Academy, GATE Program
Greenwich Music
Intempo Music School
Jewish Community Center
Mill River Collaborative
Nora's OvenWorks
JD Ospina

Pathfinders Adventure Camp
Pinot Palette
Pro Bono Partnerships
The Residence at Summer Street
Sacred Heart Greenwich, Summer Program
Dr. Steven Shaby
SoundWaters
Stamford Board of Recreation
Stamford Museum and Nature Center
Stamford Music and Arts Academy
Stamford Peace Youth Foundation
Stamford Public Schools
Stamford Symphony
Stamford Twin Rinks
Stamford Youth Services Bureau
Stamford Youth Soccer League
Temple Shalom Nursery School
Terry Conners Rink
Women's Mentoring Network
YMCA Camp Hi-Rock
YMCA of Stamford
Young Artists Philharmonic

VOLUNTEERS

Trish Carroll, Graphic design
Donna Hughes, Administration
Susan Lauria, Teen circle facilitator

Gail G. Trell, & Mark Schneider, Music Program
Coordinators
Bernie Weiss, Photographer

2022 MENTORS

Sarah Arnold
Jim Bradley
Lynne Burgess, Summer Camp Director
Susan Conner
Fran D'Agostino, Team Leader, Middle School
Jackie Dixon
Jean Gray
Margaret Gray, Co-Team Leader, High School
Diane Green
Richard Hahndorf, Jr.
Kathleen Heslin
Deb Hirsch
Dee Hoo
Susan Horstmann
Kathy Joyce
Isabel Katz
Karen M. Kelly
Kathy King
Alice Knapp & Walter Young
Peter Lasalandra
Peter Lilienthal
Jami Lo, Co-Team Leader, High School
Paola Mallozzi
Gina Martin
Bette Mocarski

Tammi Montier
Meg Moor
Ann Mulderrig
Lisa Musilli,
Betsy Nagurney
Midge Pappas
Karen Plant
Timothy Rogers
Caroline Romans
Liz Rosano
Fred Rossetti
Sarah Santasiero
Marilyn Schlosser
Daina Schuman
Diana Shattuck
Nancy Shulkind
Mara Siladi
Mary Smith, Elementary School Team Leader
Maria Sosa
Susan Tolliver
Tracy Vodola
Alma Weinberg
Cliff Wells
Kenneth & Lori Wentworth
Donna Wolff



INDIVIDUAL GIFTS 2022

Kenneth & Gwenda Asher
Edmund N. Barker
Benevity Direct Donation
Lynne & Joshua Berrett
Ellen Bromley & Tom Gizicki
Lynne Burgess
Joan Byrne
Trish Carroll & Dick Strahota
Jeff & Valerie Cohen
Robert E. Diefenbach
Irene Durand-Bryan
Heidi Fieldston & Howard Ostroff
Lisa-Findorak-Nachbar
Rosalea and Richard Fisher
Nancy & Richard Freedman
Donna & Ed Fuhrman
Lise Gordon
Margaret Diefenbach Gray & Stuart King Gray
Diane & Henry Green
Barbara & Edward Guttman
Ginny L. Gwynn & Jon Bellis
Karen & Dennis Hannigan
Jevera and Bill Hennessey
Duane & Leana Hill
Zeena Hine
Stephen Hoffman
Suzanne Horn and Norman Stone

Allison Horton
Donna S. Hughes
JustGive-Great Profits
Karen M. Kelly
Joan & Jerry Kranz
Jennifer & Mark Lapine
Dr. KM Steve Lo & Jami Keoghan Lo
Judith S. & Mark G. Lowenstein
Gene R. Martin
David Martin
Rachel McCormack-The Boyd Law Group
Maria J. Millan & Antonio M. Sieira
Mario P. & Lisa J. Musilli
Roslyn & Merritt Nesin
Heidi and Howard Ostroff
Marilyn Z. Ott
Dawn Randall
Timothy G. Rogers
Caroline Ward Romans
Elizabeth Rubin
Janet & Marc Schneider
Judy Schneiderman
Judy & David Singer
Kimberly & Greg Spies
Stamford Democratic Committee
Lauren & Steve Strelsin
Todd Thomas, Connecticut Health Foundation
Kathryn Walsh & Wesley Romansky
Donna Wolff



Board of Directors

David R. Martin, President
Jeff Cohen
Rosalea Fisher
Barbara Guttman
Jennifer W. Lapine

Jeanie Melfi-Smith
Maria Millan, Parent Facilitator
Judith Singer, PhD
Janet Schneider, Secretary
Donna Wolff, PhD, Executive Director (ex-officio)

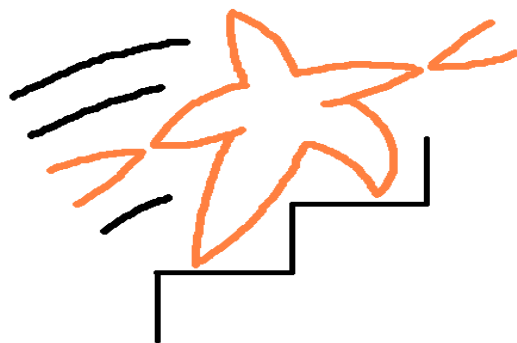


***Seated l. to r. Top row: Jennifer Lapine, Maria Millan, Janet Schneider, Judy Singer, Jeanie Melfi-Smith
Seated l.to r. Bottom row: David Martin, Donna Wolff, Rosalie Fisher***

Thank you to Judy Singer and Jeanie-Melfi Smith for editing this Annual Report

Photo credits: A special thank you to Bernie Weiss of Bernie Weiss Photography who attended numerous Starfish functions and provided so many of the photographs in this Annual Report.





Starfish Connection

Starfish Connection, Inc. is a 501c3 corporation whose mission is to help academically minded youth from low-income families attend a 4-year competitive college of their choice and change the cycle of poverty for themselves and future generations.

We welcome new mentors, donations, and support from the community. Please ask us how you can help! Visit our website to learn more about Starfish Connection. Go to: www.starfishconnection.org

Starfish Connection, Inc.
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Stamford, CT 06905