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DTF takes new name, purpose

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After almost 10 years of working to improve and enhance technology in town, the Darien Technology Foundation is expanding its mission and adding to its name.

This week, the organization officially becomes the Darien Technology & Community Foundation. It will now also provide funding for worthy capital projects in town.

It took months of talk and planning behind the scenes but the change, the foundation board decided, made sense.

"We thought this was a positive move and would have a positive impact on the community," Jim Steintal, a board member since 2005, told The Darien Times.

The foundation has been having a positive impact - \$1.4 million worth of impact - over the past 10 years. Last year, it was responsible for money to buy technology for the new Darien police boat, GPS software for the three fire departments, 25 laptops for Middlesex Middle School, desktop computers for the Depot teen center and laptops for Darien EMS-Post 53.

While technology will not be left behind, the foundation will also be focusing on capital projects that benefit the community. And a lot of that benefit will be as a partner in projects.

"We wouldn't necessarily fund the whole project," Pam Dysenchuck, foundation executive director, said. "We might offer matching grants, for example."

Dysenchuck noted that the foundation will not be taking over town projects nor funding projects that the town should be doing. The foundation's reputation as a financially-wise group helped lead to the expansion. With so many smaller projects and groups in town, the foundation thought it could serve as something of clearinghouse for capital donations.

"There are so many ad hoc groups in town, we figure that people might think it makes sense to write a check to us because we have a reputation for spending the money wisely," Steintal said.

The foundation's reputation for good spending is because of its intensive grant review process. The board spends a lot of time looking into proposals and figuring out what works best for the applicant.

In the future, the new foundation will consider projects such as new youth sports fields, renovations of buildings like the Depot or nature center, playgrounds, equipment upgrades for organizations like the police or fire departments.

"We've built up a lot of credibility and respect around town," Ward Glassmeyer, the foundation vice chairman, said. "This allows us to expand. Having grown up in Darien, I know that we can continue to fill a need and help more people embark on projects that are good for the community."

Previous donations to the foundation will be used for technology unless the donor tells the foundation it can be used elsewhere. Donations to the foundation can be made out to Darien Technology & Community Foundation, PO Box 1714, Darien, CT 06820. On the Web: DarienTCFoundation.org editor@dariantimes.com