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NewAlliance Media Advisory

NewAlliance Foundation

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***Local Philanthropic Foundation Announces New Strategy to
Better Serve Community Needs***

Last Fall, when NewAlliance Foundation’s leadership completed their two-year process to establish a new vision, mission, and goals, they knew they weren’t ending a long journey, but starting one. After all, it takes substantial effort to help forty-two Connecticut communities to become places where all people can reach their fullest potential. With new staff members in place and changes within the board of directors, the foundation now stands ready to set its ambitious plans in motion.

An independent charitable foundation based in the culturally and ethnically rich community of New Haven, the Foundation’s new mission reflects deeply held, yet hitherto not fully expressed, values of its leaders. The NewAlliance Foundation of 2023 *and beyond* is an anti-racist, anti-poverty foundation with inclusion, diversity, equity, and access as core principles. The Foundation currently supports 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations in the arts, community development, health & human services, and education. Its revised mission is to support organizations that advance literacy, build communities, and dismantle systems that perpetuate poverty and racism.

According to Executive Director Maryann Ott, internal changes will continue and are necessary to enable the Foundation to bring its vision to life. “Critical to the success of our new strategic vision is having the right team in place,” said Ms. Ott, who took the helm in January after Kim Healey retired in December 2022. Previously, Ott served as Managing Director of NewAlliance Foundation for nineteen years and spearheaded the creation of the organization’s flagship literacy program READy for the Grade. With Ott’s move, the Foundation created a new position: Director of Programs. [LaKisha Jordan](#) assumed that role in January. Jordan brings insight from the corporate world, where she specialized in diversity and inclusion, cultivating strategic partnerships, and establishing community outreach programs.

The desire to become a more flexible and responsive organization also led NewAlliance Foundation to evaluate its board structure and composition. Board Chair Robert J. Lyons, Jr. announced that Alexis Smith will fill the new Board Vice Chair position starting in March. A passionate advocate for youth, education, and community development, Smith currently serves on the boards of several New Haven area nonprofit organizations and works as Executive Director at New Haven Legal Assistance Association. New board member Fahd Vahidy is a philanthropic advisor with experience in organizational strategy, talent and leadership development, public policy, and systems change.

With these staff and board changes, the organization increased ethnic diversity and expanded its perspective. Plans are underway to make the board even more inclusive and thus more connected to the communities it serves.

“We need to be more reflective of our total community. When you talk about equity and inclusion, you're not only talking about race. The more diverse voices you have at the table, engaged in your work, the more effectively you address needs,” Ott said. “It’s pretty straightforward.”

In the coming months, foundation leaders will re-examine and adjust their funding priorities to enhance equity. They’ll prioritize work that addresses the core factors in poverty and racism. They also intend to keep assessing how well their internal processes serve as a catalyst for systemic change.

About NewAlliance Foundation

Since its inception in 2004, NewAlliance Foundation (<https://newalliancefoundation.org>) has approved approximately \$30 million in grants. A significant segment of grant-making funds READY for the Grade (<https://readyforthegrade.org>), an initiative the Foundation developed and continues to operate that provides community-based literacy support to young, underserved children to help them achieve academic and life success.

The Foundation serves children and families by building pathways to social justice and racial equity.