

Connecticut Health  
Foundation



# Supporting non-profit health advocacy: The Connecticut Health Foundation advocacy grants initiative

**Elizabeth M. S. Krause, ScM**

Program Officer

Connecticut Health Foundation

[elizabeth@cthealth.org](mailto:elizabeth@cthealth.org)

[www.cthealth.org](http://www.cthealth.org)

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# The Connecticut Health Foundation (CHF)

- Established in 1999
- “Health Legacy” Foundation
- Assets ~\$150,000,000
- Grant ~\$7 million annually
- Commitment to systems change

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# Initiative Context

- Many non-profit organizations hesitant to engage in advocacy
  - Misinformation and confusion about rules
  - Lack of advocacy capacity
- Many foundations hesitant to fund advocacy
  - Misinformation and confusion about rules
  - Board discomfort
  - Evaluation challenges



# CHF's First Health Advocacy Initiative

**Purpose:** To encourage non-profits to ensure health was part of public debate during 2006 election season

**Rationale:** Non-profits can add credible visibility to health issues of vulnerable populations

**Eligibility:** Existing CHF grantees

**Project Period:** April 2006 – December 2006

**Grant Amount:** Nine awards of \$25,000



# Request for Applications

- Funding for non-partisan activities including:
  - Organizing base/constituency
  - Building advocacy partnerships
  - Advocacy training for staff, board, and constituents
  - Using media to inform the public
  - Educating voters about candidate positions on health issues
  - Policy research/analysis
  - Educating candidates and policy makers about health issues
  - Public Opinion polls

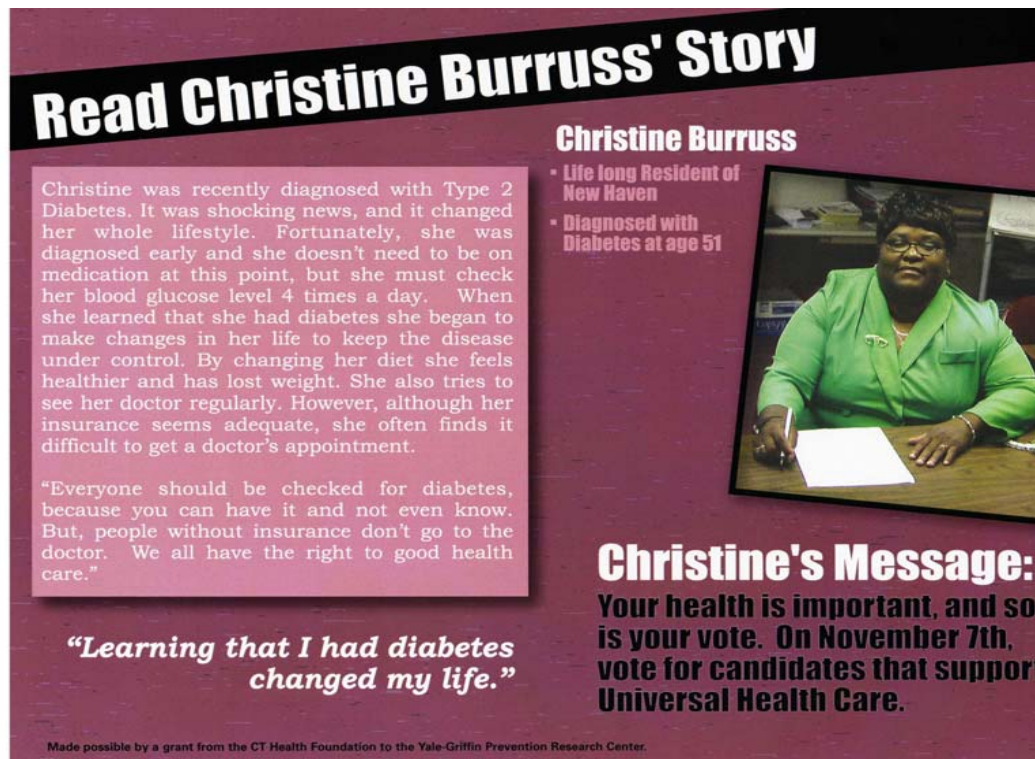
# Grantee Technical Assistance: Strategic Communications Training

- Mandatory day long workshop
- Books: *Loud and Clear in an Election Year*, *SPIN Works*
- Follow-up 1:1 TA with consultant
- Workplans due to CHF within 30 days of workshop



# Grantee Example: Diabetes and Universal Health Care Project

- **Health Issue:** diabetes, universal health care
- **Audiences:** constituents, candidates
- **Strategies:** voter registration, candidate forum, voter education guide
- **Post-Grant Outcomes:** increased civic participation in disenfranchised community, continuation of legislative roundtables



**Read Christine Burruss' Story**

Christine was recently diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. It was shocking news, and it changed her whole lifestyle. Fortunately, she was diagnosed early and she doesn't need to be on medication at this point, but she must check her blood glucose level 4 times a day. When she learned that she had diabetes she began to make changes in her life to keep the disease under control. By changing her diet she feels healthier and has lost weight. She also tries to see her doctor regularly. However, although her insurance seems adequate, she often finds it difficult to get a doctor's appointment.

"Everyone should be checked for diabetes, because you can have it and not even know. But, people without insurance don't go to the doctor. We all have the right to good health care."

**Christine Burruss**

- Life long Resident of New Haven
- Diagnosed with Diabetes at age 51

**Christine's Message:**  
Your health is important, and so is your vote. On November 7th, vote for candidates that support Universal Health Care.

*"Learning that I had diabetes changed my life."*

Made possible by a grant from the CT Health Foundation to the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center.

# Grantee Example: Asian American Health Project

- **Health Issue:** Asian health and human service needs
- **Audiences:** constituents, legislators
- **Strategies:** conference, coalition building, public education at capitol
- **Post Grant Outcomes:** active coalition, \$25,000 for new Asian Affairs Commission in 2009 state budget





# Grantee Example: Health and Education Project

- **Health Issue:** childhood lead poisoning
- **Audiences:** legislators, candidates, constituents
- **Strategies:** DVD, PSA, educational events at the capitol, candidate forums
- **Post Grant Outcome:** project set stage for passage of lead poisoning screening legislation and funding

# Indicators of Success



- Grantee Level

- Increased advocacy skills
- ✓ Increased comfort with advocacy
- ✓ Increased advocacy relationship with clients/members
- ✓ Plans for post-grant advocacy

- Initiative Level

- Increased non-profit participation in '06 public debate
- ✓ Elevated health issues on public agenda
- ? Improved policy environment for health issues



# Challenges

- Less existing advocacy capacity than assumed
- Generally oriented toward responsiveness
- Needed general strategy TA
- Targeted candidates and policy makers more than constituents
- Lacked sense of election season urgency

# Recommendations



- Non-profit organizations should play prominent roles in shaping responsive public policies
- Funders should fund health advocacy activities
- Funders should support building non-profit advocacy capacity, including year round advocacy strategies



# Resources

- Non-Profits

- Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest

[www.clpi.org](http://www.clpi.org)

- Strategic Press Information Network

[www.spinproject.org](http://www.spinproject.org)

- Foundations

- Alliance for Justice [www.afj.org](http://www.afj.org)

- Grantmakers in Health “ [www.gih.org](http://www.gih.org)

# Acknowledgements



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- The nine initiative grantees