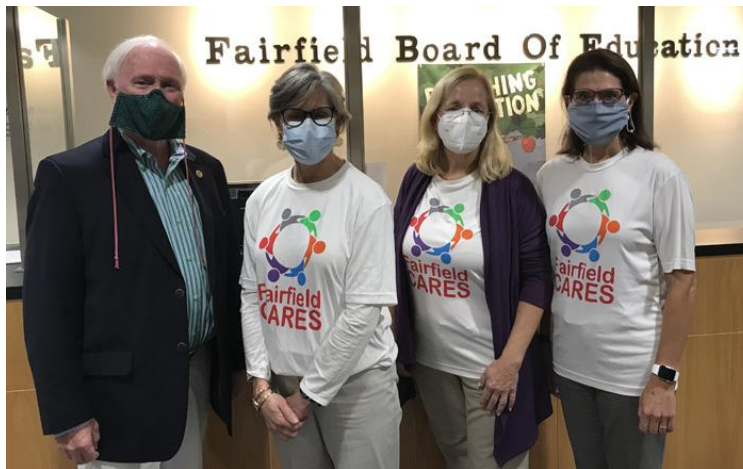




THE TOWN RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY CHOICES

## Fairfield CARES Receives \$625K Youth Drug Prevention Grant

The Fairfield CARES Community Coalition, the Local Prevention Council for the town of Fairfield, is pleased to announce that, in partnership with Fairfield Public Schools, it has received a five year federal [Drug Free Communities Grant](#) of \$625,000 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The grant, allocated at \$125,000 per year, will take effect on September 30, 2021, and will provide funding to prevent and reduce youth alcohol and cannabis/marijuana use, the two most frequently used substances by youth in Fairfield.



Left to right: Coalition members Phil Dwyer, Cathy Hazlett, Reini Knorr and Cristin McCarthy Vahey are all smiles behind their safety masks after the Fairfield Board of Education unanimously voted to accept the CDC Drug Free Communities Grant.

At its September 28, 2021 regular meeting, the Fairfield Board of Education unanimously voted to accept the grant. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, founding member of Fairfield CARES and current Co-Chairperson, could not be happier, "As both a parent and a public official, I am grateful the CDC has recognized the importance of the collaboration between Fairfield CARES,

Fairfield Public Schools, and our many community partners. These funds will allow our coalition to strengthen its outreach and connections to young people and their families as we continue our life saving prevention work." Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools and Co-Chair of Fairfield CARES, Michael Cummings also voiced his appreciation for the grant," Since its inception, Fairfield CARES has had a close relationship with Fairfield Public Schools. This grant will provide additional resources to help our middle and high school youth choose not to engage in alcohol and cannabis use, keeping our kids safe. Together we are stronger."



**THE TOWN RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY CHOICES**

The Fairfield CARES Community Coalition was established in 2009 in response to the findings of a 2008 youth survey that showed 38% of Fairfield Public School's (FPS) 7th-12th graders drank alcohol in the past month and 18% had used cannabis/marijuana, the worst data in a five-town area at the time. A decade of state grant funding, use of best-practice strategies, and a partnership with Positive Directions in Westport has led to significant improvement in youth substance use in the community. Spring 2021 youth survey data showed that only 15% of FPS 7th-12th grade students drank alcohol in the past month and only 5% had used cannabis/marijuana, a decline of 60.5% and 54.5% respectively from 2008. 2021 data was collected during the Covid pandemic. Ongoing trends will be monitored with the Drug Free Communities Grant.

The goals of Fairfield CARES' Drug Free Communities Grant (DFC) are 1) to establish and strengthen collaboration among community agencies to address youth substance use in Fairfield, and 2) to reduce and prevent alcohol and cannabis/marijuana use by Fairfield's 7th through 12th grade students. Grant funding will be used to educate parents and youth on the health risks of underage drinking and cannabis use, support the Fairfield Police Department's efforts to combat underage substance misuse, provide responsible beverage server training to restaurant wait staff, provide professional development and resources to health teachers on latest cannabis/marijuana research, and build skills in youth to be peer to peer prevention educators among other activities.

### **ABOUT FAIRFIELD CARES**

Fairfield CARES Community Coalition, established in 2009, is a town-wide organization of parents, school representatives, local business leaders, law enforcement, clergy, counseling professionals and youth services organizations. Fairfield CARES envisions a community that promotes healthy, responsible choices through prevention and education for youth, young adults, and families.