

BACKPACK DRIVE

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Seeing local families, businesses, and organizations come together to support important causes is truly inspiring. I'm excited to continue growing these efforts and creating more opportunities for our community to connect and make a difference."

This year, backpack donation was made even simpler with a Target gift list, which includes backpack options as low as \$5 each. "It's super easy and convenient for everyone," Hale shared, "When people order through my Target gift list, items get shipped directly to me. Once I receive them, I drop them off at the New Fairfield Police Department. They have been kind enough to store them for me!" The police department is involved, in part, because the backpacks will be distributed at DanburyWORKS's Party on the Patio, Wednesday, August 19, 4:00-7:30pm at the Danbury Police Department Headquarters, 375 Main Street, Danbury. At the event, local businesses fill the backpacks with supplies and potential resource information.

Hale explained, "Fairfield County Moms Hub continues to grow and has become a place where local Moms and families can connect, find resources, discover local activities, and support one another. I'm excited to continue expanding the group by starting monthly events, including family-friendly activities, mom meetups, and opportunities for couples to connect." Her primary goal is to continue to create more opportunities for people to build friendships, support local businesses, and feel connected with their community.

New members are always welcome. Hale stressed, "One of my biggest goals for Fairfield County Moms Hub is to create an inclusive space where moms and families from all different towns feel comfortable joining, connecting, and participating. Whether someone is new to the area, looking to meet other moms, or just simply for local recommendations and resources, everyone is welcome!" Communicating through their Facebook page, events are organized throughout the year, including activities for both moms and children. Of the group's philanthropic efforts, Hale said, "Giving back has always been an important part of Fairfield County Moms Hub. I continue to look for opportunities to support local families and organizations through collections, partner and community initiatives." She coordinates an annual Bags and Bears drive in collaboration with 98Q and the Department of Children and Families foster care collection, which provides essential items and gift cards for local children under 18 years old who have been displaced. The group also donates to an annual diaper and wipe collection that is run by the Community Food Rescue/Community Action in Danbury.

For those interested in giving, visit the Fairfield County Mom Hub's page on the Target Registry: <https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift-backpackcollection> by Monday, August 10. "It means a lot to me," Hale reflected, "because I know how much a little support can matter, and I just hope these efforts help even one family feel seen, cared for, and a little less alone."

NF LIBRARY

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Brewster Central School District for decades. "It was her love of libraries that inspired this gift," Norris said. Shako also had deep roots in New Fairfield and was an active member of the New Fairfield Senior Center community in retirement.

With no limits or conditions placed on the gift, the board "requested the staff make a wish list of how we could better serve the public," Norris said. Of this early list, the first purchase was for The Charlie Cart, a mobile cooking station. The cart has since gone into heavy rotation for programming, serving as an educational platform for how to make everything from tzatziki sauce to burrito bowls and beyond. The purchase supports the hope of all involved to "use these funds to enhance all current user experiences and to entice so many more to come and join the fun," Norris shared, going on to say the board also wants to "create more work spaces, replace shelving and furniture to create the optimum use of the space we have. We are considering painting and new flooring."

Norris noted that research was conducted, with board members "taking field trips to other libraries to see how they were using their space, view types of furniture, and what their communities found most valuable." Friends of the New Fairfield Library members were asked for their input

and the board reviewed previous town surveys. She said, "We want to make sure we hear from all our stakeholders."

With planning and wish lists in hand, the board began to look for an architect to help with more ambitious projects and an HVAC survey was recommended. Working with the New Fairfield Permanent Building Committee (PBC), those surveys are now finalized and show that the "entire AC system upstairs will have to be replaced," Norris shared. She explained, "Though this is a building repair and would fall under the purview of the Town Budget not the Library's, we as a Board felt that part of the gift could be used to make this improvement. This will make our Library a healthier building." In addition, "The town did not have money set aside for such an outlay at this time. It would have to go through another budget cycle which would delay any movement on our improvements for an entire year - at least." The next steps include hiring an architect, with the help of the PBC. At a recent PBC meeting, it was noted that Town Engineer Mr. Tony Iadarola will likely serve as the project manager.

Norris remarked, "We want our library to be viewed as a community hub for ALL. Our library is more than books -- people meet, play chess, do work, do research, finish a puzzle, enjoy a program, play Dungeons & Dragons, learn a craft, make a friend, enjoy the quiet, and even make some noise." Shako's gift, which all in the library's orbit are tremendously grateful for, will certainly aid in these endeavors. If others are interested in contributing to the funding for all of the exciting enhancements ahead, they are certainly welcome to. There is a link to donate at Newfairfieldlibrary.org/i-want-to.

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