50 years changing lives

Hands On HARTFORD

Caring in Action

Founded in 1969 as Center City Churches

December 2019 News

Hands On Hartford, in partnership with others, strengthens community in Hartford by responding faithfully to people in need through programs that change lives and renew human possibility.

Toy Shoppe Celebration

Our annual Toy Shoppe Celebration took place this year on December 19th. Hundreds of families "shopped" for gifts for their children. Families and kids enjoyed crafts, games, music and pizza, along with a visit from Santa.

A special thank you to the young men at Avon Old Farms School for providing the toys, to Barnes & Noble for donating books, and for additional toys collected by Infoshred. A huge thank you to our sponsors: First Church of Christ Simsbury, United Healthcare, and Synergy Financial Planning. And we couldn't have done it without enthusiastic help from a big team of volunteers.

We are so thankful for all of the generosity in the community that made the holidays brighter for so many of our Hartford neighbors.

Christmas Community Meal

Thank you to everyone who helped out with this year's Christmas Day meal for the community!

We had 266 guests this year! The meal—including a delicious roast beef entrée—was provided by Max Cares Foundation, there were special treats from the Goodman Family, holiday gifts for adults from our friends at The Hartford, gifts for children who attended, and lots of volunteer helping hands.

Special thanks to Emily Kaas (our former volunteer coordinator and a former AmeriCorps member) for her leadership and hard work.

What an inspiration it is to see such an amazing team of dedicated and caring people who get things done for our community!

Faith In Action

The First Presbyterian Church in Hartford congregation brought their annual Gifts of Warmth collection. They delivered 143 lbs of food, 186 pairs of socks, 25 sweaters, 16 flannels, 9 hats and 23 pairs of gloves. This will go a long way towards helping our neighbors stay warm this winter and we thank everyone who donated.

Special thanks to the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut for this big donation of toiletry items. We are so grateful for these gifts which are so hard to come by for our pantry families.

New Year's Day Meal

Happy New Year! Volunteers greeted Hartford neighbors with a smile and a warm meal to start the year - and the decade - with love and kindness. Thank you to all of those who helped serve 147 community members this New Year's Day. Special thanks to First Church of Christ in Simsbury for the decorations, the great game of bingo, the fresh salad and the wonderful desserts—especially the hit of the day, cheesecake!

Caring in Action—the Community We Serve

Many of the families who attended our Toy Shoppe event are community members who also receive food from our pantry. One mother in particular told us just how much our services mean to her. She is a mother of six, with three biological children and three adopted children between the ages of three and thirteen years old. When asked about what Toy Shoppe meant to her, she stated "it means the world to me to have something more than just us under the tree."

She also spoke about her gratitude for the food pantry, explaining how helpful it has been for her to feed all of her children. She shared how wonderful it is to have milk, eggs, and meat for her family, food that is greatly needed in her household. This mother is one of many in the community who expressed sincere gratitude during the Toy Shoppe event for all that Hands On Hartford provides.

We all have our hands on Hartford!

Our friends at the Gengras Center School prepared "Blessing Bags" for our guests at our Community Meals Program, and employees at The Hartford prepared gift bags for all of the guests attending our Christmas Day meal, including a hand-knitted hat for everyone!

Nassau Re brought a wonderful gift of hot chocolate, candy canes and other treats for our Backpack Program kids, and Greater Hartford Young Democrats collected gifts of warmth for the community!

Our good friend Shannon Hull and family to the rescue! They brought in hats, gloves, scarves and sweatshirts for 80 of our guests at our Community Meals and Day Program. So very much appreciated in this cold winter weather.

Our friend Joey Batts is back this year with an incredible donation from his Hip-Hop for the Homeless event, and he brought our new friend Jason Diaz from Hartford Firefighters Association who made a generous donation as well!

A big "Thank you" and "Happy Holidays" to the kids at Montessori Magnet School who brought a big donation of food for the MANNA Community Pantry!

Thank you from all of us and on behalf of the folks we serve, to the hundreds of people who made financial gifts to Hands On Hartford this year. You are true heroes and you are what makes this community strong!

The Café at Fifty-Five is open Tuesday-Friday, 7:30am-2:30pm, here at 55 Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford.

Caterers Who Care provides on-site and off-site catering, including a broad selection of breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items with an emphasis on our ability to customize our selections to fit groups from a handful to hundreds, and accommodate your budget. **Check out our catering menu at our website!**

Our **Community Kitchen** also operates as a shared use kitchen, where members use the kitchen and all of its equipment on an hourly basis—ideal for small culinary businesses, start-ups, and food trucks/carts.

The Café, Caterers Who Care and Shared Use Kitchen all support Hands On Hartford direct service programs.

For more information contact Molly Reynolds at 860-706-1537 or mreynolds@handsonhartford.org.

Hands On Hartford has been serving the Hartford community for fifty years. We are a nonprofit social services agency that increases food security and nutrition, improves health and provides housing while we engage volunteers and connect communities.

We welcome volunteers and encourage folks to stop by to visit to see our work in action.

To arrange for a visit, make a donation, or learn about Hands On Hartford's legacy society, contact Kate Shafer at kshafer@handsonhartford.org or 860-706-1505.

To learn about volunteering with Hands On Hartford, contact our volunteer coordinators at volunteering@handsonhartford.org or 860-706-1522.

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