

## November 2021 News

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### Thanksgiving Generosity

What an amazing outpouring of support the past month has brought! As we prepare for Thanksgiving at Hands On Hartford, so many groups have been helping to provide for our Hartford neighbors, to be sure their holiday is filled with warmth and abundance. Our friends at **Fidelux Lighting LLC** are sponsoring this year's Thanksgiving meal for the community, and **employees at The Hartford** are assembling and donating care kits for our guests. And a huge list of individuals and groups have been donating food to distribute with turkeys to our pantry families for their Thanksgiving dinners. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts to the following (and to anyone we missed): **Travelers employees, Conard High School students, Axinn Veltrop & Harkrider, COCC, Vox Church, UBS Financial, the Boyce Family, Know Good Market, The Hometown Foundation, CT Foodshare, Terri Saulter, Webster Bank, Hartford Sweat, USJ Athletics, NEOS/Capco, and Jaida Foster and friends from Bloomfield High School**



And to all of the volunteers who have packed bags and organized food donations, we couldn't do it without you!





## Faith In Action

**First Church of Christ in Farmington** hosted a Faces of Homelessness Speaking event at the end of October. Faces speaker Ralph shared his story and perspective with courage and honesty and the attendees were very engaged and clearly moved by his experiences. Another group who recently hosted a Faces speaking event was the youth group from **Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford**. Then the youth group worked to create no-sew blankets to share with our unhoused neighbors, who are really starting to feel the cold this fall. The Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau aims to educate, empower, involve and make change - specifically, change in the way homelessness is address in our community. This is a program that is near and dear to our hearts because everyone deserves to have a place to call home. For more information about these events, contact Geoff Luxenberg at [gluxenberg@handsonhartford.org](mailto:gluxenberg@handsonhartford.org).



## Welcome New Team Members!

**Jonathan Mitchell**, *Director of Food, Nutrition, and Culinary Programs*

Jon will take the lead in all things food, including the MANNA Community Community Pantry, kids' Backpack Nutrition Program, Community Meals, Shared Kitchen, and soon the cafe that will be opening this Spring! He's jumping right into his new position helping to coordinate (and unload) the thousands of pounds of food that are being donated for the Thanksgiving holiday. Welcome Jon!





### Jessica Park, Assistant Housing Director

Jess, shown here on the second floor of our Center for Community, affectionately known as the 55B apartments, will be leading our supportive housing efforts, ensuring safe and affordable supportive housing and intensive housing and health focused supportive services for individuals and families with complex health issues (including those living with HIV/AIDS) throughout the Hartford area. We're delighted to have her on the team!



### National Hunger and Homelessness Week

November 13 - November 21 is **Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week**. We wanted to share with you some "stats for thought" to put things in perspective: Did you know: In CT alone, 2,594 people were homeless on the night of Jan. 26, 2021 including: 234 families, 167 "chronically homeless" individuals, and 128 veterans. Collectively, this is a 32% increase in unsheltered homeless individuals since January 2020. The good news? There is hope! Since 2007, overall there has been a 42% reduction in homelessness in Connecticut including a 24% decrease for families and 31% reduction for kids. The work this community is doing to fight homelessness is working and we're committed to continuing the work as long as it is needed.



### Disco Forno Gives Back!

Staff and volunteers enjoyed truly DELICIOUS, complimentary all-you-can-eat pizza (even with gluten free and Vegan options) donated by our Hands on Hartford Shared Kitchen members, **Disco Forno Pizza Napoletana**. We are SO GRATEFUL for owners, Karen & Brandon Gervickas, for their generosity and pizza-making skills!

### Special Thanks for Gifts and More

In honor of National Lipstick Day, **M.A.C. Cosmetics**, a long time funder of our supportive housing program through their MAC VIVA GLAM initiative, donated 2,000

lipsticks for us to share with clients, volunteers and staff! We're having so much fun with these - "Chili," "Del Rio," "No Interruptions," and "Japanese Maple" are the colors - something for everyone!



Our wonderful bingo volunteer, Marianne Parker-Brown, who does so much for this community, has done even more! With her recommendation, we have received a \$1,000 grant from **Bob's Discount Furniture "30 Days of Giving Campaign."** Here's Marianne (in the middle) with HOH team members Donessia Harris and Stephanie Boyce. We are so grateful for the support and the connection.



The very talented Ashli Esteves-Nelson of **Brown Butter Creations** brought this generous donation for the weekend kids' Backpack Nutrition Program. We've spent a lot of time thinking about Thanksgiving in the past weeks, and in the meantime, the Backpack program continues to provide hundreds of kids in Hartford with nutritious kid-friendly food for the weekend.



Our new friends from **Santander Bank** have been collecting food for the pantry, and will continue to do this throughout the season. Ashley Vitale and Florencio Vargas brought a donation and came for a visit in November and we can't wait to see them again!



## About Hands On Hartford

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.

We are committed to increasing food security and nutrition, improving health and providing housing while we engage volunteers and connect communities.



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