

December 2021 News

Holiday Happenings

After a busy November with lots of Thanksgiving celebration and donations, we're on to December! This community has been so generous with food drives, donations of toys, gifts of warmth and so much more, helping to keep folks warm and sharing the joy of the season. We are looking forward to welcoming the entire community to our Christmas Day and New Year's Day holiday meals in the coming days.

This year's Toy Shoppe Celebration which took place last week might have been the best ever! Lots of toys, lots of volunteers, lots of families and kids and huge amounts of joy and spirit! Overheard in the toy room: "Oh my son has been wanting this for so long, he's gonna be so happy Christmas morning!" We send thanks to all of the donors (of toys, of gift cards for families, of financial support for the whole party, of wrapping paper and decorations) and volunteers who made all of this possible. This was our 29th year working in partnership with **Avon Old Farms School** to host this event and they donated more toys than ever this year. They are an impressive and compassionate group of young men who definitely know how to get the job done! We are so grateful for the support of **PeoplesBank, First Church of Christ Simsbury, Talcott Resolution, Nassau, COCC**, the amazing **Jaida Foster, Pilates Defined**, and **University of Saint Joseph** among others.



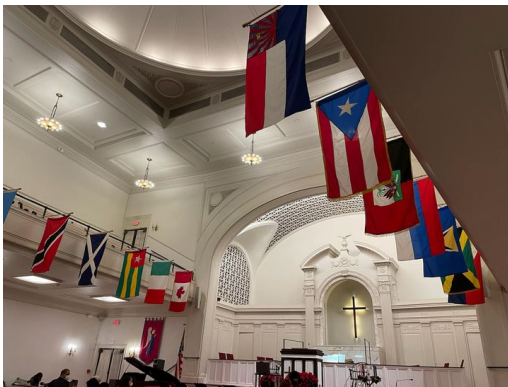
Small Miracles

Often, the folks who turn to Hands On Hartford for help face barriers that to some might seem minor, but to them seem insurmountable. Small but tangible barriers to advancement can stop people in their tracks: a uniform for a new job, birth certificates and other IDs to confirm their eligibility for employment, bus passes to get to work before the first paycheck comes. That's where our **Small Miracles Fund** comes in.

One man we recently connected with is "Eduardo." Eduardo regularly attends our day program. One day he came to our staff and said he was ready to find employment despite experiencing homelessness. Eduardo needed his birth certificate and a replacement ID in order to get a job, but with no source of income, he was unable to pay the fees needed. We were able to use the Small Miracles Fund to help him obtain both documents. He has been working for the past three months and has plans to move into his own apartment by the end of this month. His pride and new-found self-confidence and optimism is inspiring to see.

We are especially grateful to the donors who have provided the Small Miracles funds and helped support the staffing that goes along with it - we love to see these barriers being broken down so folks can look to their futures with hope!

Faith In Action



Our Executive Director, Barbara Shaw, was delighted to worship with and visit with friends at **Central Baptist Church**, one of our founding congregations. We are grateful for our long-standing faith community partners that further our mission of providing food, housing and health to our Hartford neighbors.

Welcome New Team Members!

Nat Wyse, *Program Specialist*

Nat will be working with several of our programs - helping to schedule MANNA Community Pantry appointments and backing up Pantry staff; helping screen and schedule applicants for homeless prevention services; backing up Homeless Outreach Team staff and Community Meals Day Program staff; and helping with special events like the Toy Shoppe Celebration - and more.





Carlos Cuevas, *Data Entry/Clerical Assistant*

Carls fills a long-needed position at the front of our Center for Community, welcoming folks in the door, manning the phones, and helping with a broad variety of clerical and data entry needs. Next time you're here, Carlos may be the first person you see - be sure to say hello!

Hands on Hartford Annual Memorial Service

On December 10th at Hands On Hartford, our community came together to remember and honor the lives of friends, family, colleagues, and clients we have lost. This photo is of a tree of remembrance from the memorial. Sharing our pain and joy makes us all stronger and reminds us that we are not alone.



Food Incubator Program Launches in 2022



Through a collaboration with **reSET** and **Hands on Hartford**, the **Food Incubator** supports social entrepreneurs in the Greater Hartford area to build sustainable, impact-driven food businesses. The 12-week program is an opportunity for local small businesses and startups to connect with their ideal client, strengthen their business models and identify their social or environmental impact. Whether in the development, launch or maintenance stage of a food business, all are encouraged

to apply! For those interested in the program, reSET would love to meet you at the upcoming virtual info session, from 5-6pm on Wednesday, January 12th. These are open formats with plenty of time for Q&A! This program is funded in part with Community Development Block Grant funds allocated to Hands On Hartford by the **City of Hartford**. Interested? Join an info session to learn more, ask questions, meet other applicants, and get feedback. Call Hands On Hartford Shared Kitchen and Cafe Manager, Molly Reynolds, at 860-706-1537 for more info.

Special Thanks for Gifts and More

We were so THRILLED to have had former NFL star player, **Chris Baker**, along with his friends and family, prepare, cook and serve a delicious hot lunch for guests at the Community Meals Day Program! Chris's motivation for serving comes from his connection to his roots, love for cooking, and desire to give back.



Jessica, owner of **Pilates Defined** studio in West Hartford, dropped off \$725 worth of Target and Stop & Shop gift cards to Hands On Hartford from a drive her business hosted for our annual Toy Shoppe event. We are so grateful for this generosity and thoughtfulness during this holiday season!



Here are our friends at **Hartford Sweat** delivering 175 pounds of food and a generous financial donation of over \$1,300. Wow! They raised the food and financial support from their clients and friends to make a difference locally - right here in Hartford at the MANNA Community Pantry.



Our friends at **Muslim Coalition of Connecticut** are taking good care of folks experiencing homelessness: they donated towels, super thick socks, extremely warm gloves, as well as a wonderful set of sleeping bags for our Homeless Outreach Team to give to folks who are sleeping outdoors on these freezing cold nights. We truly appreciate their care and compassion.



Earlier this month, we picked up an **AMAZING** 3,875 pounds of food for the MANNA Community Pantry courtesy of **South Glastonbury's Boy Scout Troop 156**; they even sorted through the food, categorized and discarded any expired food before we got there! This is an inspiring group of youth who are displaying their growing leadership skills. We are so fortunate to have their support!



Our friends at **Operation Excellence with Hartford Healthcare** spent a morning with us, alongside our talented cook Ruby (pictured right), serving our guests in Community Meals.



We're also delighted to report that Hartford Healthcare will have a team on-site starting in January on the first and third Wednesdays of each month to provide medical care to our guests. More information on this coming soon.

Staff member Kelly enjoyed an incredible night of local talent at the **8th Annual Hip Hop for the Homeless event**, benefiting Hands on Hartford and the folks we serve. **Joey Batts**, a High School English teacher at Manchester High and skilled rapper himself, both coordinated and hosted the event at **Four Ropes Boxing Gym**



in Hartford. Thanks to this event, Joey and friends raised funds which will help serve so many of our Hartford neighbors in need.

Meet Sufiya, a very special 8 year old who, when she learned about people in our community facing food insecurity, felt so inspired and moved to help that she held a food drive, creating a poster, sign-up sheet and donation requests. When asked what motivated her passion, she explained that "kids don't get good grades when they are hungry." Sufiya has made all the difference in the world to us and our Hartford neighbors! We are so touched by the compassion and activism of this young heart. She's our young hero



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.



HOW CAN I HELP?

Go shopping! If you're an online Amazon shopper, be sure to start your shopping at smile.amazon.com and select Hands On Hartford as your charity. That way .5% of eligible purchases will automatically go to Hands On Hartford.

Make a donation! You will be part of a network of donors, volunteers and staff who work together to provide food, housing and related services for families who are struggling to make ends meet. To make a financial donation, visit our website at www.handsonhartford.org and click "Make a Donation Now," or mail your check to Hands On Hartford, 55 Bartholomew Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106.

Or contact Kate Shafer at kshafer@handsonhartford.org for more in-kind donation ideas.

Request a matching donation from your employer! Many employers will match all or part of your donation - a great way to double your impact.

Add us to your estate plans. Contact Executive Director Barbara Shaw to explore planned giving ideas and to join our Legacy Society. bshaw@handsonhartford.org or 860- 706-1502.

We are grateful for our community and the love, caring, compassion and support we see every day.



