

January 2022 News

Make your gift today

One Face of Homelessness

Imagine homelessness. What do you see? Many people imagine someone sleeping on a park bench or underneath a highway underpass. Maybe you imagine someone who struggles with substance abuse or addiction. Or maybe you even think of someone asking for food or change with a cardboard sign, standing near a stoplight. But homelessness has many faces. Homelessness might also look to some of us like someone couch-surfing, or sleeping at a different friend or family member's house every night. It can also look like someone living out of their car, or staying at a shelter each night. There are many different faces of homelessness, and this is just one story of someone who experienced homelessness within our community.

“Gertrude” came in seeking help because she was experiencing homelessness for the first time. Her daughter was in the military and Gertrude lived with her daughter while she was deployed in another state. Gertrude’s daughter was then relocated overseas and Gertrude could not join her. A resident of Connecticut for most of her life, Gertrude decided to come back home to Connecticut by herself. Her only source of steady income came from her social security checks in the amount of \$823, so once she was back in Connecticut she was unable to save enough money for a security deposit on an apartment. In fact, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Connecticut is \$833, and saving for the security deposit (which is the amount of two months’ rent) is understandably difficult on such a limited income. At 67 years old, she was forced to live out of her car. Gertrude, referred to Hands On Hartford by 2-1-1, met with our basic needs and neighborhood services coordinator, Bianca, after living in her car for almost a year.

Gertrude shared her struggles with Bianca who helped Gertrude secure most of the money necessary for a security deposit. Gertrude was then able to move into her own apartment with the help that Bianca provided as well as the help of a few grants and a government subsidy. When meeting with Bianca, Gertrude also mentioned that she had an outstanding utility bill from many years ago that was impacting her ability to secure services. Bianca was able to arrange assistance for settling the balance, ensuring that Gertrude had access to her utilities in her new home. We are honored to be a part of Gertrude’s moving story and to be able to give similar assistance to many folks facing similar challenges each month.

Shared Kitchen Member Spotlight

“What inspires me is the joy that my cakes bring to my customers.” **Mimi Cheung** acquired her amazing baking skills when she was home, like so many, after the COVID pandemic struck. And although she is self-taught, her creations are both beautiful and delicious. She joined the Hands On Hartford Kitchen in the summer of 2021 and is working to build up her business, **Black Sesame Bakery**. She



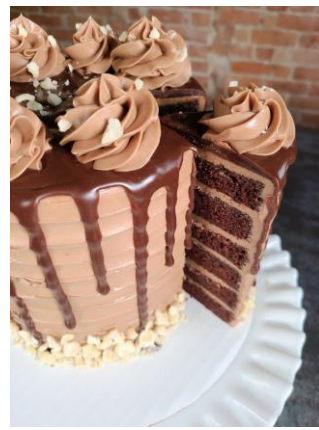
makes both traditional and custom cakes in practically any flavor and design.

Mimi loves the challenge of learning and creating something new, the precision that baking and cake decorating requires, and finds the whole process as a great antidote to stress. The beauty of her work speaks for itself; you can see more and place your order at her website,

blacksesamebakery.com.

Like many new business owners, Mimi found the start-up costs to be daunting. She was delighted to discover that HOH had grant programs that could help. Mimi qualified for a CDBG economic development grant through the City of Hartford which covered the cost of kitchen membership, kitchen use time and ServSafe certification. Further, as a grantee of this program, she is able to participate in the Food Incubator program offered in conjunction with reSET.

To find out more about Hands On Hartford's Shared Kitchen, and subsidies available for Hartford residents and businesses, contact Molly Reynolds at mreynolds@handsonhartford.org.



Faith In Action

JTConnect (Jewish Teen Learning Connection) teamed up with our Faces of Homelessness Speakers Bureau for an amazing virtual event. At the end of the event, the young people present asked their speaker some excellent questions, and found the experience to be both powerful and inspiring. JTConnect has a long-standing relationship with Hands On Hartford and has participated in a number of park cleanups and community events. We are so grateful for their partnership and support.

Does your business, community or faith group want to hear first-hand stories of the challenges faced by folks experiencing homelessness? Our Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau aims to educate, break the stigma surrounding homelessness, and share ways we can all help. Contact Geoff Luxenberg at gluxenberg@handsonhartford.org to find out more.



Welcome New Team Members!

Angel Diaz, *Peacekeeper and Janitor*

This month we welcome **Angel Diaz** to the Hands On Hartford team. Angel will be filling the vital role of custodian and peacekeeper for our Community Meals Day Program. He will certainly be a regular face in our community meals dining room, so be sure to say hello.



Juanita Feeney, *Housing Case Manager*

We also welcome **Juanita Feeney** to the team. Juanita is our newest Housing Case Manager working to support tenants receiving supportive housing assistance. We're so glad to have her joining us here at Hands On Hartford.



Special Thanks for Gifts and More

A huge thank you to everyone that spent their New Year's Day with us (including Ms. Belleza Latina 2022 seated in the front row with the sash)! **Max Cares** and **First Church of Christ in Simsbury** sponsored a meal of beef brisket, roasted corn, kale with roasted garlic, cornbread, salad, and pie. We were thrilled we could start the year with a belly full of incredible food and our hearts full of gratitude.



We are extremely thankful for the amazing partnership and support of **Travelers** in so many ways. Most recently, the **Travelers Employees Club** made a generous \$5,000 donation to support our work. And with the daily lunch donations for our community meals program, Travelers is with us in spirit here at Hands On Hartford every day.



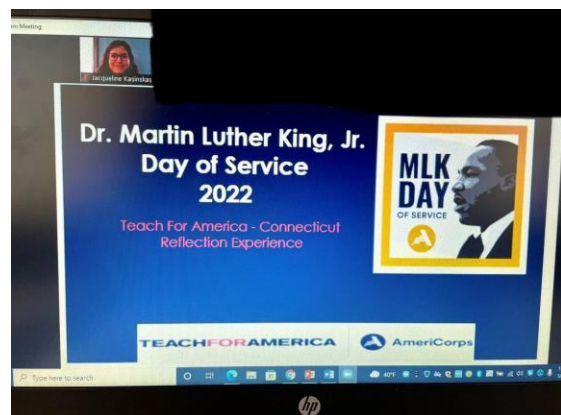
Our community-minded friends at the **Mandell JCC of Greater Hartford** spent time making 215 sandwiches and blessing bags filled with socks, snacks, and t-shirts to benefit the folks we serve. They also created kind and colorful notes! Thank you to the families and volunteers who made this possible.



The **Epsilon Omicron Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. of Hartford, CT** sponsored a community meal on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. We are so grateful for their support. The dinner menu included spaghetti and meatballs, penne with Alfredo sauce, grilled chicken, salad, and homemade bread. For dessert, our guests enjoyed "brookies" (brownie, chocolate chip cookie, and sugar cookie combo) and pound cake. Thank you, **Chef Paul and Sous Chef Dan**, for preparing such a hearty meal for our community. And a special thank you to the **UConn School of Medicine and UConn School of Dental Medicine** volunteers for serving this meal. We are feeling grateful for the dedication and commitment to all those who made tonight's meal possible.



In other Martin Luther King Jr. Day news, **Teach for America** hosted a virtual food drive for their annual Day of Service. They collectively had over 200 pounds of food for our pantry delivered directly to us, and our Community Engagement Coordinator, Jackie, did a virtual presentation on our organization and the work we do here. A huge thank you to Teach of America for finding creative ways to work around the pandemic and for their generous donations.



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.



Visit our website

