

February 2022 News

Team Member Spotlight!

Donessia Harris is Day Program Specialist for the Community Meals Day Program **and** co-Chair of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Donessia provides navigation services and assistance through the Day Program, helping folks access resources for shelter, housing, employment, health care, and more. She began as an intern in 2017 and has been with us every since then. She is also currently pursuing her Master's Degree from the UCONN School of Social Work.



What Donessia loves about her job: "Being able to see the actual difference that we make. It's not often you can help someone and they come back to let you know how much it is appreciated."

Why she joined the DEI Committee: "After the past two years with all of the racial injustice that has come to the forefront, to help, in my own way, of sharing diversity and inclusion in the workplace."

What she is proud of: The progress the DEI Committee has made already, from survey feedback evaluations, to an upcoming multi-cultural staff potluck, to monthly cultural theme boards around the building; there are so many opportunities for learning and growth that our DEI Committee is tackling.

Included here are photos of three of the bulletin boards, created by our DEI Committee, that are now on display at Hands On Hartford to honor Black History Month. Each board has its own focus, from black women who have made a difference in the world, to black-owned business and media recommendations, to facts about local Connecticut black history. "We hope these boards will stimulate conversations, moments of reflection, and opportunities to learn some new information," explains Donessia.

We are ever grateful for our diverse and inclusive staff team and are so happy to celebrate Donessia and her commitment to Hands On Hartford and our wonderful community.



Save these Dates - please mark your calendars today!

Save the date!

Thursday, September 29, 2021, 5:30pm
Hartford Marriott Downtown

An engaging and entertaining evening with the extended Hands On Hartford family supporting and celebrating the ways we all work together to ensure everyone has a place at the table.

For more information or to become a sponsor,
contact Molly Reynolds, mreynolds@handsonhartford.org



HANDS & HEARTS
together a place at the table



SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY MAY 21, 2022

JOIN HANDS ON HARTFORD IN CT FOODSHARE'S

WALK AGAINST HUNGER



**MORE
DETAILS
COMING
SOON!**



Recognizing Black History Month

In honor of **Black History Month**, we celebrate the fascinating life of **Mary Emma Townsend Seymour**, an African-American woman who was an inspirational politician and civil rights pioneer, born right here in Hartford, CT in 1873! Mary was the very first African-American woman to run for a state legislative position, a true accomplishment for her era. Further, as a life-long civil rights activist, she worked diligently undercover to expose poor working conditions for women tobacco workers in Connecticut.



Faith In Action



After hosting a really moving Faces of Homelessness event, the confirmation class at [St. Matthew Lutheran Church](#) in Avon followed up to put their "caring into action" by hosting an amazing food and toiletry drive. After they brought their collection to Hands On Hartford's pantry and had a tour of our Center for Community, they began talking about getting the adults at their church involved too! We are so grateful for these wonderful young supporters, who are also ambassadors, for the important work of assisting our Hartford neighbors.

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Alison! **Alison V. Scherer** is a dedicated Hands On Hartford volunteer serving in our Community Meals Day Program and has been with us for about 6 months so far! In addition to serving with us on a weekly basis, Alison has volunteered at various holiday meals and at our "Toy Shoppe" event.

Alison shared "Hands On Hartford had an excellent reputation for providing service to its clients; I was also really impressed with the way staff demonstrated their respect and appreciation for the people they serve -- it seemed like a collaboration between people rather than a strict delineation between 'giver,' and 'receiver,' or between person in power and person in need. (Alison is shown on the right with our Community Meals team members.)



Welcome New Team Members!

Christian Brooks,
Housing Case Manager

This month we welcome **Christian Brooks** to the Hands On Hartford team. Christian is our newest Housing Case Manager working with folks in our supportive housing program. We're excited to have him contribute his great energy to our team!



Alison Medeiros Gomez,
Peer Support Specialist

We also welcome **Alison Medeiros Gomez** to the team! Alison will be working with the Homeless Outreach team to help connect folks living outdoors to the services and support they may need to move toward having homes of their own. All of us here are glad to have her positive energy as part of the team!



Special Thanks for Gifts and More

We are all truly inspired by 10-year-old **Brook Ellis**, who has written and published a book about homelessness called *The Kind Princess*. She decided to donate the proceeds she earned from book sales to Hands On Hartford to help alleviate homelessness. Here she is with a big check! If you'd like to get a copy of this book for yourself, it's available on Amazon! What a truly inspiring young leader!



Our youngest volunteers are **Jay, and Landon,** shown here with their mother, **Carrie.** These adorable twin boys recently turned 5 and for their birthdays, asked their classmates to make donations to Hands On Hartford - so thoughtful! They raised over \$500 to support the Backpack Nutrition Program! Recently, they also spent time packing bags to help us prepare for an upcoming backpack delivery. What amazing little leaders.



In early February, **Greater Hartford Jack & Jill** hosted a food drive in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service after their original drive in January was canceled due to the snow. They collected a whopping 400 pounds of food to support our MANNA Community Pantry and kids Backpack Nutrition Program! As you can see, this was definitely a family affair!



Six years ago on February 2nd, we moved into our agency home, the new **Hands On Hartford Center for Community**, after decades of renting and borrowing space around Hartford. In the words of our **Executive Director, Barbara Shaw**, "What a joy it has been to fully realize our goal of bringing our services and teams together under one roof in this vibrant neighborhood."

Happy Anniversary to the team and to the community of supporters, guests, neighbors, visitors, clients, friends, and volunteers who have taken this journey with us! Here's to another year of working in partnership, with so many, to help engage our neighbors and meet the needs of our beloved community

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.



PROUD AFFILIATE

**POINTS
OF LIGHT**
GLOBAL NETWORK

