

July 2022 News

Gather55 has come alive!

July 14, 2022 marked an exciting day for us: we celebrated the **GRAND OPENING** of our innovative new **pay-what-you-can restaurant, Gather55**. Gather55 harnesses the power of delicious food to connect diverse communities through a restaurant with an inclusive vibe where all can gather, regardless of ability to pay.

We were joined in celebrating this monumental day with numerous friends from our community, including **Hartford's Mayor Luke Bronin**, the talented and renowned chef (and our friend) **Chef Tyler Anderson**, **Connecticut Foodshare's President & CEO Jason Jakubowski**, the **20th District's State Representative Kate Farrar**, **Press Secretary for Congressman John Larson**, **HOH staff Donessia Harris** and avid **Gather55 patron, Milton Shannon**.



Such a wonderful day of connection, gathering and inspiration!

We welcome everyone to enjoy a delicious culinary experience at Gather55. **Monday through Thursday for breakfast from 8:30am-10:30am and lunch from 11:30am-2:00pm. And stay tuned for dinner service coming this October.**

As exciting as the buzz around our opening has been, the reality is, for this ambitious initiative to be sustained, not only do we need diners, but we need donors and doers. If you share in our hopes and dreams of this powerful mission, please consider making a donation and if you have a few hours to spare, reach out to us to volunteer in our restaurant.

Visit our website to donate – www.handsonhartford.org. Please select "Gather55" as your designation, or mail your donation to Hands On Hartford, 55 Bartholomew Ave, Hartford, CT 01606. For volunteer opps, email volunteering@handsonhartford.org.

Thank you for helping us break down barriers and build opportunities for authentic community connection. Don't forget to follow us on our new page @Gather55 on Facebook and @Gather55bartholomew on Instagram and check out the Gather55 website at www.gather55.com.





Faith In Action

Gather55 brings folks from all walks of life together to break bread, and we couldn't do it without the support of groups like First Church in Windsor . They have made a significant financial investment in the success of this venture and are walking the walk too - they'll be volunteering regularly with Gather55, helping prep and cook and serving our diners with care and compassion. Here they are on their first day volunteering - Pastor Nicole, Jeri, Ken and Shawn in bright green t-shirts, along with Executive Director Barbara Shaw, and our three chefs - Jeremy, James and Karl. [see photo on next page] How lucky we are to have hands-on partners like First Church in Windsor!



Hands On Hartford Board of Directors

Effective June 2022, Cynthia Bates has been elected as the new Board Chair of Hands On Hartford. Cindi is a healthcare regulatory lawyer and privacy professional who practiced law in Hartford for 34 years, first at the firm Robinson & Cole and then for 29 years at Aetna Life Insurance Company. She is a graduate of Wesleyan University and the University of Connecticut School of Law. She has been a member of Hands On Hartford's board since November 2019. We are so grateful for retiring Board Chair Brian Neary's leadership and governance and delighted that he is continuing his board service.



You are invited....

What? A virtual open house with Hands On Hartford's Executive Director, Barbara A. Shaw

Why? Hear about the latest updates - Gather55 (our new pay-what-you-can restaurant), the Powerhouse building

project, and anything else you'd like to know

When? Thursday, August 18, 12:00 - 1:00 pm

Where? By Zoom – please email kshafer@handsonhartford.org and we'll send you the Zoom link.

Questions? Contact Kate Shafer at kshafer@handsonhartford.org or 860-706-1505. Hope to see you in August!



Barbara A. Shaw, LCSW
Executive Director, Hands On Hartford

New Staff & Staff Changes Spotlight



Jennica Torres,
*Basic Needs/Neighborhood Services
Coordinator*

Jennica first joined Hands On Hartford as a social work intern and after her graduation has re-joined us to put her skills to work in the homeless prevention arena, working with folks to ensure they can remain safely and stably housed. We are delighted to welcome her back to the team.



Stephanie Plateroti,
*Café Associate, Gather55 &
Tenant Assistant*

Stephanie started as a Community Engagement intern, continued as a Development intern and we just couldn't let her go. She is now working as a Cafe Associate at Gather55, and a Tenant Assistant with Hands On Hartford's Housing Services. Stephanie does it all and we're lucky to have her on the team!



Bianca Almanzar

Housing Case Manager & Neighborhood Services Specialist

Bianca has worked with us as a neighborhood services specialist for some time now and she's now branching out to use her skills and experience as a housing case manager with our Housing Services team. Her commitment to ensuring that our Hartford neighbors have the support and assistance they need to get and keep safe and stable housing is a real inspiration!

Thank you Hands On Hartford Walkers!

Final numbers are in and we are delighted to report that CT Foodshare Walk Against Hunger walkers supporting Hands On Hartford raised a total of \$39,793.50 and we are so very appreciative of this fantastic group effort! We are just blown away by the incredible support for our MANNA food programs and the power of our entire community coming together like this. Thank you to everyone for another great Walk!



Special Thanks for Gifts and More

Our generous friends at **Zephyr's Street Pizza** in West Hartford, who make some of the tastiest pizzas in the area, hosted a fun-to-watch bartending competition and **fundraiser** earlier this month benefiting Hands On Hartford. DJ Darth Fader spun tunes while people dined on delicious pizza-by-the slice and mingled between competition rounds. Raffle ticket sales and most drink purchases went toward HOH.

In total, they raised **\$1,000** for us to provide much-needed services to our Hartford community. We appreciate owner **Dante Cistulli** for thinking of such a fun way to support the Hartford community and HOH! We love partnerships like these!





Heads Up! Hartford joined us for a day of service and learning. Their generous group of campers learned all about the services we offer here at HOH and showed their "giving spirit" by donating their time, sorting and stocking pantry shelves with the 1,000 pounds of food donations they brought, as well as helping clean up our gardens.

We so appreciate their hard work and dedication! Our pantry is looking so well-supported and our garden is so much healthier and happier now that these young leaders sowed their love into our garden!

We love a good surprise! Last month, we received an unexpected call that inspired us so much!

Mesa Associates Inc. reached out to us to let us know that as part of their giving-back initiative, they had selected Hands On Hartford to **receive a check for \$3,000** to support our programs serving the community. So amazing!

What touched us the most was how much research they put into identifying their top 12 potential recipients in all of CT and MA and how **we were voted #1 of only two other organizations to receive a prestigious gift...and out of the three, the only nonprofit awarded from CT!** What an honor!





CGI is one of our new partners and is truly committed to our Hartford neighbors. They partnered with Hartford Steam Boiler to host a food drive to support our Homeless Outreach Program, invited us for a visit to their space in the iconic Nassau Financial Group boat building, and coming to volunteer at Hands On Hartford. They are our latest sponsor of this fall's Hands & Hearts Together event, helping to create a place at the table for all of our Hartford neighbors.

Earlier this month, we welcomed the **New Britain & Hartford YWCA Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) teams**, who visited Hands On Hartford for an in-depth tour and info session about HOH services and volunteer opportunities.

The SACS team also enjoyed a wonderful meal at Gather55 and going forward, they will be offering ongoing supportive sexual assault crisis services to folks visiting our Center for Community.



Miss Porter's School's summer Global Leadership Program focused on Racial, Economic, and Gender Inequality. For the second week of their program, these thoughtful students visited us to learn about all of the services we offer here at HOH.

They also participated in an engaging presentation from our **Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau**, asking some very thoughtful questions to our speaker and making heartfelt connections with the speaker.

Not only did these bright young minds learn a ton, but they had an opportunity to give back; they put their hands on Hartford helping to clean up our **community garden** which was in desperate need of some TLC. We appreciate these students' hard work and open hearts.

We are so excited to announce that **Synergy Financial Planning** has adopted our pasta sauce shelf in the pantry - that means plenty of pasta sauce for pantry families. And not only that, they are sponsoring our fall **Hands & Hearts Together** event too! Thank you to this generous company for taking such good care of our community!

If your business is interested in sponsoring a shelf in the pantry, or supporting Hands & Hearts Together this fall, please email Kate at kshafer@handsonhartford.org.



July 4th Holiday Meal Recap

Celebrating our Independence!

We want to give a HUGE thank you to everyone who generously donated their time and positive energy to help serve our **280 guests** at the July 4th holiday meal here at Hands On Hartford!

Everyone involved provided an essential role, from serving food to sanitizing tables to dishwashing to greeting to re-stocking drinks and supplies to plating food to distributing socks to calling BINGO and everything in between welcoming to our guests to join in the festivities.

If anyone would like to get involved in helping with a future holiday, or daily meal, please reach out to us at volunteering@handsonhartford.org!



We are always looking for those with a few hours to spare and a big heart.

[See more photos on the next page!]



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.

Leave a legacy. Ensure your long term impact on this community by including us in your estate plan, making qualified charitable distributions from your IRA, gifts of appreciated stock, or include us as a contingent beneficiary of your life insurance. 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

