



## August 2023 News

Make your gift today

### Please Join Us in Celebrating Our Connections!

By now you've probably heard that on **Thursday, September 21 from 5-9pm**, Hands On Hartford staff, volunteers, friends, and supporters will gather at the **Downtown Hartford Marriott** to celebrate the many ways that Hands On Hartford creates **connections that change lives**. We gather in honor of those whose connections bring meaning and purpose to what we do, who we are, the values we uphold, and the reason we have been serving the Hartford community for over 50 years.

We treasure our many connections, whether it's connecting our low income neighbors to a myriad of services, connecting our volunteers to opportunities to serve our community and establish new friendships, connecting a variety of groups to opportunities to give back to their community through financial contributions or volunteer hours, or connecting folks, from all walks of life, to each other for better understanding and stronger relationships.

One such connection, that is a great example of the ripple effect of this work, is a story about our former program participant Juan (whose name has been changed):

***Juan, a veteran, became connected to Hands On Hartford a few years ago through our Homeless Outreach Program. Our Outreach staff found him living outside and offered him snacks, toiletry items, and warm socks to address his immediate needs. They then matched him with a shelter and referred him to our day center and our (former) soup kitchen, where he became a daily participant for about 2 1/2 years.***

***We quickly learned that, as many do, he unfortunately had a rough time adjusting to the environment of the shelter and would come to Hands On Hartford to decompress. According to our team, he seemed to need a listening ear because of the stress he experienced while at the shelter, in part due to living in a shared space after years of living in solitude, along with having to interact with challenging personalities, and other stressful factors.***

***In truly listening to his distress, our Outreach team responded by connecting him with a different shelter whose environment was better suited for his personal needs. The shelter then matched him with housing, an exciting next step! Having learned of the other supportive services HOH provides, he then returned to Hands On Hartford for help with a security deposit for the apartment that would prove to finally be an opportunity for stability for the next phase of his life.***

***Because of his confidence in HOH, Juan then reached out by email to***

*one of our team members to ask for assistance for a close friend, who was in need of help with getting an ID (necessary for both housing and employment).*

*Aside from helping his friend, Juan also began caretaking for a family member with a health issue. Because he is now living in his own apartment and in a more stable living situation, he is now in a position to spend ample time with the long-term care needs of this loved one.*

Juan's experience started with just one connection that then blossomed into a series of connections to support not only his own life, but the lives of his loved ones.

We hope that you will carry Juan's story in your heart as an example of just a few of the many lives we are able to change because of our generous donors and community supporters. We hope that you will decide to join us in our celebration of ***creating connections and changing lives by attending our event on September 21st, which we know will truly be a night to remember!***

**CLICK HERE TO BUY TICKETS or to PREVIEW OUR ONLINE AUCTION**  
(going live Sept. 7)!

## ***About: Hands & Hearts Together***

### **5-6pm Reception**

*w/wine, beer & hors d'oeuvres*

### **6-9pm Dinner & Celebration**

*Live, interactive entertainment provided by  
Hartford's premiere talent, the Bap Pack, featuring Hartford lyricists:*

***Hartford's 1st Troubadour, Self Suffice/Khaiim the RapOet  
- Tang Sauce - Klokwise - Hydro -***



***Also featuring a fabulous silent online auction  
and live auction!***

## Thank you to our generous event sponsors!



## Faith In Action

We are grateful to have our young friends from **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**, who go by the title of "**Elders**", volunteer once a week in Gather55, along with the "**Sisters**" of their church, who also devote some time once a week to helping support Gather55. We are grateful for this partnership!



## Going Green and Growing Green

Saving the earth, one banana peel at a time!  
Huge thanks to **Constellation** for a generous grant to support our composting and recycling fees! In addition to banana peels, we do lots of composting through both our food pantry and Gather55, plus our staff and volunteers enjoy the walk outside in the



fresh air to drop off any personal, compostable waste they may have leftover from their lunches. We're so happy to have Constellation's help in doing our part for the earth!



Earlier this year, we announced the wonderful **CGI Technologies** as our first (and only) sponsorship of our Community Garden. Aside from purchasing a ton of tools, trellises, tomato cages, hoses, a storage bin and more, many members from their staff team have come to help upkeep our garden during company time, which we greatly appreciate, as this shows just how much CGI truly values giving back to their community. The first photo below depicts the latest CGI group, along with our **Head Custodian Rashane Sands** (right), who stopped by to give our garden a little extra TLC while enjoying our flourishing sunflowers! The second photo below is of the original crew, the ones who helped prep the garden, way back in April, so it could look as amazing as it does today.

Included here are also before-and-after photos of our garden- what an incredible improvement! Aside from our Garden Committee, led by **HOH staff Nat Wyse**, and our **dedicated HOH volunteers and tenants** who enjoy volunteering, we couldn't have imagined such an abundant yield without CGI's support. Gather55 guests, MANNA Community Pantry clients and tenants, have all benefited from the vegetables, herbs and flowers grown in our garden, along with our area wildlife of pollinators, birds, chipmunks, squirrels...and sneaky neighborhood groundhog! What a treat for all!

Thank you CGI Technologies and especially **Shannon Lener**, CGI's Office Manager who spearheaded this effort and partnership!







## Gather55 Dinner Update: Chef Jesse Powers



We're honored to welcome **Jesse Powers, Chef and Culinary Director of The Beamhouse in Glastonbury**, to our list of beloved Gather55 guest chefs. We'll be adding a few of his special dishes to our dinner menu, debuting on **Wednesday, September 6**.

Having grown up in Manchester, CT, Jesse spent time in some of Connecticut's greatest kitchens, learning respect for ingredients and attention to detail. He developed his skills through stints at Cavey's, The Copper Beech Inn, Millwrights and, eventually, as executive chef at the renown ON20 before landing at The Beamhouse.

When asked why he decided to volunteer his time and talent to the Gather55 kitchen, he said ***"I am excited to be part of Gather55's mission to bring the***

*community together through food. Nourishing and providing has always been a major part of what I love about this business and being able to do that, for a portion of the community who hasn't always had access to it, is extremely rewarding."*

We are thrilled to have Chef Jesse contribute some amazing dishes to our dinner menu and are grateful he embodies our mission of giving back to the community. Stay tuned for our updated September menu, starting Wed. September 6! Make your reservations now at [www.gather55.com](http://www.gather55.com) and please help us spread the word!

Follow our Facebook page [HERE](#), our IG page [HERE](#), or check out our website at [www.gather55.com](http://www.gather55.com) for more details, coming very soon!

**MAKE A RESERVATION HERE**

## Save the date!

### Hands On Hartford

Invites you to a **FREE** Labor Day Holiday Meal!

**Monday, September 4, 2022**

**Doors open: 10:00am**

**Meal served: 11:00am—1:00pm**

*Indoor and outdoor seating, or take food to go!*

Located at:

Hands On Hartford's Center for Community  
55 Bartholomew Ave, Hartford, CT  
(Off of Park Street two blocks west of Pope Park)

- **A delicious meal offering:** BBQ Pulled Chicken Sandwich or Veggie burger, Baked Beans (vegetarian option available), Coleslaw, Chips, & Strawberry Whipped Cream Dessert
- **Activities:** Corn Hole & Sidewalk Chalking

*Bus passes available in case of inclement weather*

For more information, call 860-728-3201  
or visit our website: [handsonhartford.org](http://handsonhartford.org)



Thank you to Talcott Financial Group for your sponsorship!



## Positive Projects & Partnerships

Check out this great example of youth generosity: A young people's book club called "**Finding Our Culture Through Reading**" hosted a lemonade stand in July at the Cultural Center in East Hartford with huge success! They elected to donate half the proceeds (over \$600!) to Hands On



Hartford and are using the rest of the proceeds to finance a field trip to the NYC Tenement Museum, which ties in to the next book they are reading. We are filled with admiration and gratitude!



Our friend, **realtor Inez St. James** **Realtor**, donates a portion of her fee from every sale...and Hands On Hartford was the lucky recipient of a donation she made in August. Huge thanks to Inez (shown on left) for this gift (and for inspiring the gifts of a few others too)!



Talk about creating connections!

Our **Development Associate & Executive Assistant, Kelly Dougherty**, recently attended a wonderful concert by NY jazzy R&B duo "**Acute Inflections**" comprised of **Elasea (El) Douglas** (also a former Broadway singer) and her partner and bass extraordinaire, **Sadiki Pierre**. At their performance, seeing that they were raising funds to create blessing bags for those experiencing homelessness near their neck of the woods, Kelly asked them if they'd be interested in helping support Hartford's neighbors in need as well.



This generous couple jumped at the opportunity and not only drove quite the distance to deliver **93 personalized bags** filled with higher end toiletry items, a notebook, inspirational book, eye masks, thermal socks, and more, but they also took the time to **tour HOH, offer to help stock our pantry shelves and fill some backpacks for kids in our Backpack Nutrition Program, and dined at Gather55 for dinner** (they loved it)! They even offered to donate a special performance to our



evening restaurant guests, for a future date TBD.

What an inspiring musical duo and an amazing example of **creating new connections to help change lives**.



**Boy Scout Troop 156** comes through again! With so many families visiting our pantry these days, we were having a hard time keeping our shelves full, and these amazing boy scouts from South Glastonbury came to the rescue this past month. They collected over 1,300 pounds of food - and, as you can see, organized and boxed it for us as well! We can't say enough about how generous, helpful and caring these young people are!



We had a fantastic team from **Talcott Resolution** this past month! They got SO MUCH DONE and really worked together as a team with tons of good spirit and energy – even outdoors in the heat!

After a quick introduction and tour of Hands On Hartford, they worked hard to enhance and organize a variety of areas of our facility- from our Backpack Nutrition Program room to our community garden and outdoor space, to even to our MANNA community pantry.

They first completely emptied our Backpack room (which is no small feat in and of itself) and then cleaned all of the shelves, bins, walls and floors; organized all the backpack & outreach supplies, and decorated the walls to brighten up the room.

Outside, they weeded our community garden and other areas and even mulched. And finally, they helped to quickly unload our large food bank delivery that arrived in the middle of all of this.

They further supported us by choosing to dine at Gather55 for lunch and have often sponsored our community holiday meals. What a huge difference they all made, and





continue to make, here!

**Thank you, Talcott, for being such a great community partner!**



## Pantry Donations Still Needed



Did you know that SNAP benefits (what used to be called "food stamps") cannot be used to purchase either diapers or toiletry items like shampoo, conditioner, soap, and shower gel? For folks struggling to get by, we try to have these items on-hand in our pantry, but they are often hard to come by. You can help!



Aside from food, we'd love your donation of diapers (especially size 3, 4 and pull-ups), and full size shampoo, conditioner, soap and shower gel to keep our shelves stocked. Drop them off at Hands On Hartford, 55 Bartholomew Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106, or you can even have them shipped via Amazon or USPS with "Attn Pantry."

**Thank you, everyone, for your support of our community!**

**Contact Kelly at [kdougherty@handsonhartford.org](mailto:kdougherty@handsonhartford.org) with questions.**

## Bidding a fond farewell...

This month, we bid a fond farewell to four of our dedicated and beloved staff, who include (in clockwise order) **Jon Mitchell**, Director of Food, Nutrition & Culinary Programs; **Stephanie Plateroti**, Cafe Associate/Tenant Assistant. **Renato Salomao**, Manager of Homeless Prevention & Outreach; and **Donessia Harris**, Community Day Program Specialist. Most of these staff have chosen to move into jobs that are more aligned with their specific field of study and aspirations. Though it was bittersweet, we enjoyed the time to get together, as a HOH family, to celebrate each of them in their own unique way. We wish them well in their new career paths and know the guests, staff, and volunteers will all miss them dearly, as each one of them left an indelible mark

on our organization and the people we serve.



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**Welcome to our new HOH Staff Member!**



**Jovanie Gordon**  
*Zeppo House Case Manager*

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## **Hands On Hartford is Hiring!**

Hands On Hartford staff are dedicated, caring, and hardworking people who like to have fun while making a difference in our community. With great benefits, staff recognition and support, we value teamwork, compassion and community.

**Check out these open positions and help us spread the word:**

- Case Manager Homeless Outreach (Full Time)
- Tenant Assistant (Part Time Weekends)
- Tenant Assistant (Part Time)

**Find out more about these positions and how to apply [HERE](#).**



## **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?**

**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](http://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 Donna Colliton at [dcolliton@handsonhartford.org](mailto:dcolliton@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, at [bshaw@handsonhartford.org](mailto:bshaw@handsonhartford.org) or 860- 706-1502, to explore planned giving ideas and to join our Legacy Society.

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



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OF LIGHT**  
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