

## Early 2024 Newsletter

### Holiday Happenings & Celebrations at Hands On Hartford!





## **As 2023 Approached an End, Hands On Hartford was the Place to Be!**

**Our busy holiday season started with our Annual Turkey Distribution on Friday, November 17, 2023, with 583 turkeys and fixings given out to our community! Then came our Thanksgiving Day Community Meal, with over 408 delicious meals served by our amazing staff and volunteers. Gifts of warmth, donated by several of our community partners, were also given out to guests that day.**

**This year's Annual Toy Shoppe event held on Saturday, December 17th was another great day! Avon Old Farms School's generous donation allowed us to purchase toys for over 110 families, so that parents could shop for their children for the holidays. While parents shopped, their children were able to attend a fun holiday party with crafts and treats. Santa and the Grinch were also in attendance to share in on the fun! This amazing event could never have come together without our hard-working staff, event sponsors, and volunteers.**

**This year's Christmas Day Community Meal was the most attended holiday meal ever held at Hands On Hartford! Over 545 guests were served a delicious holiday meal! Our younger guests were also able to chose a special toy to bring**



home with them!

**We are happy to report that a combined total of approximately 680 children, received toys during the holiday season!**

**It was truly a special holiday season for everyone at Hands On Hartford!**

**We are grateful to our community of supporters and volunteers that assisted us in making everything possible!**

## **2023 Annual Appeal Update**

**Sending out a big "Thank You" to everyone that generously donated to our 2023 Annual Appeal!  
It was a success!**

**We are truly grateful for our amazing community of supporters.**

**You have helped us move our mission forward each and everyday for almost 55 years!**



**Thank You for  
Helping Us Move  
Our Mission  
Forward in  
2024!**

# SAVE THE DATE!



## **HANDS & HEARTS** **TOGETHER** CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024, 5:30 PM**  
**THE CONNECTICUT CONVENTION CENTER**

**This Year's Event will be a Double Celebration:  
Our Executive Director, Barbara Shaw's Retirement  
as well as our 55th Anniversary!**

**Keep On the Look Out for Additional Event Information  
and Sponsorship Opportunities!**

**Questions?**  
**Please Contact Donna Colliton at**  
**[dcolliton@handsonhartford.org](mailto:dcolliton@handsonhartford.org)**

**Learn About Sponsorship Opportunities!**

# HOH Volunteer Spotlight



**We always like to highlight the volunteers who make our work possible!**

**This father and son duo, Michael and Ryan, volunteered at 6 community meals we hosted in 2023! We are so grateful that they choose to spend their holidays volunteering at Hands On Hartford.**



**Thank you Michael and Ryan!**

## Gather55 Update

**We are proud to report that our Gather55 Day Restaurant served over 40,000 meals in 2023! Our participation model allows for some diners to pay a minimal amount or volunteer for 30 minutes for their meals. We welcome others from the Greater Hartford area to join us for a delicious and healthy breakfast or lunch. You will enjoy your meal and at the same time give back to others as well!**

**Our Gather55 Evening Restaurant celebrated its first anniversary in late fall. Our fine dining evening model has had amazing monthly guest chefs as well as their signature dishes featured throughout 2023. Its truly the best kept dining secret in Hartford!**

**Please consider joining us for dinner some evening - you won't be disappointed! You will also be giving back to others as well, since the proceeds from Gather55 Evening helps our Gather55 Day Restaurant do what they do best!**



## Upcoming Guest Chefs at Gather55 Evening:

- Joey Cusano from LeMazet, West Hartford Center
- Adam Greenberg from Sparrow, West Hartford Center
- Tim East from Union Kitchen, LaSalle Rd. West Hartford

Please visit our website at [www.Gather55.com](http://www.Gather55.com)  
for more information!

## Positive Projects & Partnerships

We loved having groups like this group from CVS Health / Aetna's Commercial Medical Underwriting Group that joined us during the fall. They heard from a Faces of Homelessness speaker,



had a tour of Hands On Hartford, and put together backpacks for our kids weekend Backpack Nutrition Program – and did some more pitching in around Hands On Hartford while they were here. What a great team, putting their caring into action!



To Learn More About Group Volunteering Opportunities, please visit our website or contact: Kelly Dougherty at [kdougherty@handsonhartford.org](mailto:kdougherty@handsonhartford.org).

## Pantry Donations Needed!



We hate to sound like a broken record, but the tune unfortunately hasn't changed. With the increase in folks experiencing food insecurity and over 1,000 households relying on our pantry each month by the end of 2023, we are in an ongoing need for help from our community to assist in keeping our pantry shelves stocked.

We are most in need, today, of:

- Soup
- Cereal or Oatmeal
- Beans
- Canned veggies
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Pasta Sauce
- Snacks
- Beverages
- Full-size toiletries

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

**Thank you for the support!**

# Shared Kitchen News...

## Meet Shared Kitchen Partner - Nicola Poplin of Pop's Guacamole



*"Hands on Hartford has been the cornerstone of my business growth, offering not just kitchen time but also unwavering support in setting and achieving goals, providing invaluable resources—both educational and financial—and presenting countless opportunities for success."*

Nicola joined the kitchen in early 2021. She is moving to her own dedicated kitchen at the Swift Factory in North Hartford. While here she was able to take advantage of both the Food Incubator and Food Accelerator programs offered in partnership with reSET. Her guacamole has been featured at Gather55 and she is a donor to our food pantry.

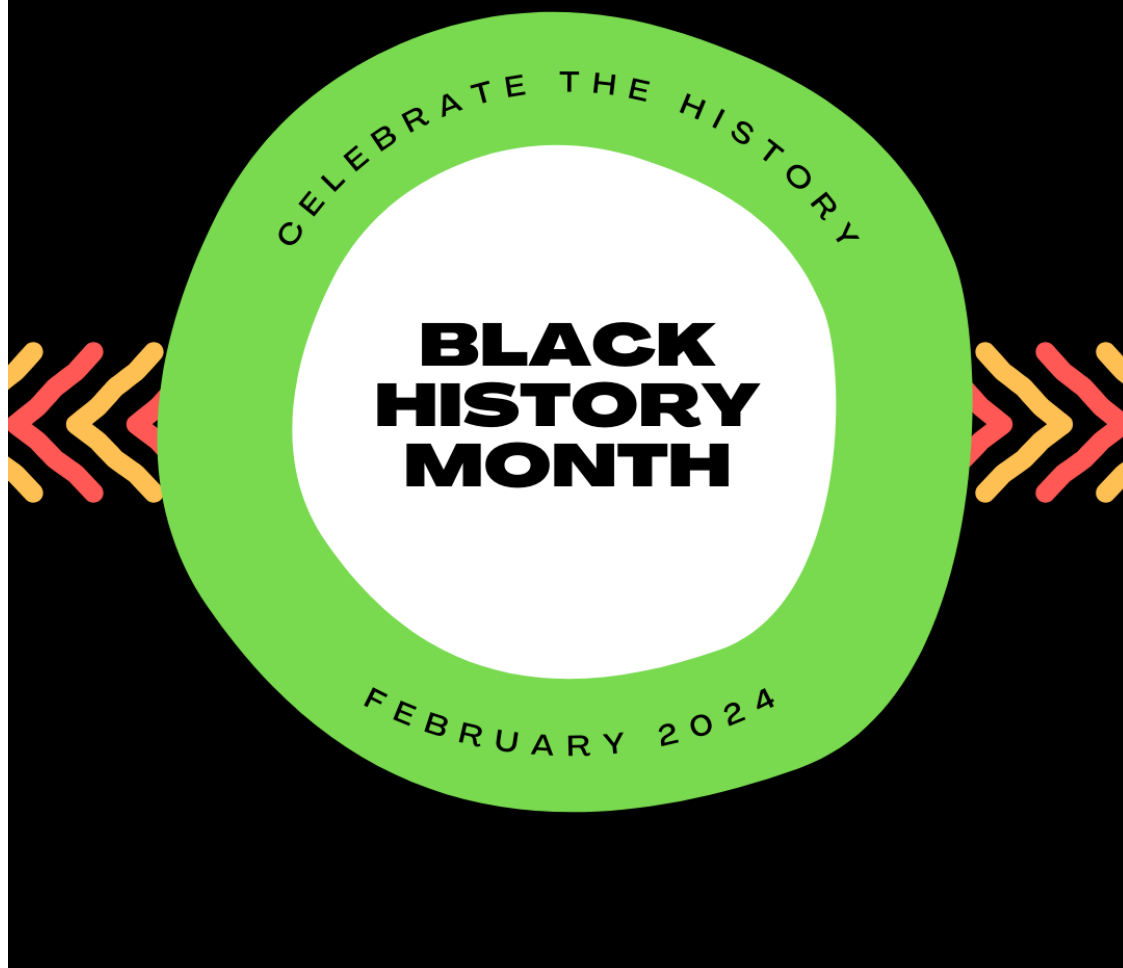
## Hands On Hartford is Hiring!

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.



[Click Here to View Current Job Openings](#)





## 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.***



Visit our website



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