

## September & October 2023 News

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### Hands & Hearts Together 2023 - A Great Evening to Remember!



Sending out a big heartfelt "Thank You" to our amazing community of donors, sponsors and supporters who helped make this year's ***Hands & Hearts Together celebration, held on September 21st at the Hartford Marriott Downtown***, a success! It was such a fun night filled with live music, interactive song-making, dancing, a sit down dinner, our biggest silent auction to date (with over 125 items), a live auction, great speakers and so many of our amazing volunteers, staff and community supporters that have shared in our mission for over 50 years. Information about next year's ***Hands & Hearts Together celebration*** will be shared in the new year! And be sure to keep an eye on our social media page soon for all of the photos from our event!

Our friends from **Avon Congregational Church, UCC** have been all-stars during the pandemic and beyond! Pictured here are volunteers Kathy Hine and Beth Ferrari, who, back in November 2020, during the height of the pandemic (when everyone was staying home and HOH was in desperate need of assistance), stepped up to volunteer in our Backpack Nutrition Program room, sorting through hundreds of donations and stuffing them in backpacks so over 200 children in need, each week, could receive nourishing snacks and meals to support them through the weekends.

These dedicated ladies, along with other hardworking volunteers from their church, have since come each and every Wednesday from 9:30am to noon or, as they say, "until the work is done". In addition to volunteer support, they also support our Gather55 restaurant by treating themselves to an occasional lunch after their shift and gathering a group (of now 9 church friends) bi-monthly to have dinner at Gather55.

We are so grateful for their long and dedicated support, especially throughout the height of the pandemic!



## Celebrating Diversity

**October is Global Diversity Awareness Month.** *National Today* explains, "...October celebrates Global Diversity Awareness Month [which] pays tribute to the diverse minds and beliefs held by all cultures around the world. We live in a multicultural society and embracing the values of various cultures only strengthens our understanding and appreciation of the world." In honor of this month, our **DEI&B (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging) Committee** invited staff and our Board of Directors to participate in a wonderful "**Diversity Awareness Celebration**", which included a multi-cultural potluck, chances to listen to a variety of music, and an opportunity for staff to share an item of sentimental value that represents their heritage. This is just one of the many ways Hands On Hartford provides an opportunity for connection, education and enrichment for our staff and volunteers. Everyone looks forward to these wonderful ways to connect and deepen our relationships with one another as well as **celebrate both our commonalities and our differences.**





*Staff were asked to bring in a dish that represented their culture and enjoyed dining on a variety of flavors and cuisines from around the world, including Italian, Puerto Rican, Caribbean, Polish, American and more!*



*Folks displayed items that reflected their cultural heritage and/or had special value to them. Some items that were brought in included family photos, a Kukui Nut Lei from Hawaii, a Pilon (mortar & pestle), Mexican Paper Art and woven hats.*



*The team enjoyed sharing in community. Celebrations like these provide them an opportunity to bond with one another, learn about each other's cultures, broaden their knowledge and celebrate both commonalities and differences.*

## Gather55 Daytime Featured Diner



**IT'S THE PERFECT PLACE  
TO GET INVOLVED WITH  
THE COMMUNITY...AND  
THE FOOD IS SLAMMING!**

*Gather55 Diner Shondale*

**Gather55 diner, Shondale**, was found waiting patiently, a mug of coffee in hand, for lunch to start so he could order one of his favorite menu items. He is a regular diner and we are always thrilled to see him!

We asked Shondale what makes Gather55 special outside of the delicious food. *"It's a great place to come grab a bite to eat, get involved with the community, and somewhere people can come to get help with finding resources."*

We love that Shondale sees the value that Gather55 has to offer the Hartford community and are happy to feature him as one of our many valued diners!

## Gather55 Dinner Update: Chef Tyler Anderson



Join us for dinner at **Gather55 this November** and enjoy the culinary creations of the talented **Chef Tyler Anderson**, plus enjoy a visit from this distinguished chef out in our dining room on Wednesday, November 1, when he's here debuting his three new dishes!

Chef Tyler's additions to our menu will include **Pickled Beets** with whipped ricotta and caraway crumb; **Sea Trout** with braised cabbage, cilantro & pumpkin seed pesto; and a **Campfire Cake** with toasted marshmallow meringue and graham cracker crust! Tyler is a Gather55 partner and creator of our evening dining model, so it should be no surprise when we tell you his dishes are going to be incredible!

You may have also already enjoyed some of his delicious cuisine at one of his many popular Connecticut restaurants. Tyler owns and operates **Ta-Que**, **Bar Pina** and **Terrero** in Hartford, and **Millwright's** in Simsbury. He is also the culinary director of **Ore Hill & Swyft** in Kent, which was awarded one (of 50) of **'America's Best Restaurants'** in 2023 by the New York Times. It is also the ONLY restaurant in Connecticut to be awarded this honor.

And Tyler's accomplishments don't stop there; he has been nominated for the **"James Beard Best Chef Northeast Award"** seven years in a row, has been named **"CT Chef of the Year"** and was a contestant on Season 15 of **"Top Chef"**, **"Chopped"** and **"Beat Bobby Flay."** Hands On Hartford was also proud to award Tyler with a coveted **"Superstar Volunteer Award"** at our 2023 Volunteer Recognition Awards ceremony.

We launched Gather55's evening restaurant just over a year ago and we can't think of a better way to celebrate **our first anniversary** than having Chef Tyler Anderson as November's evening guest chef!



Make your reservations today at [www.gather55.com](http://www.gather55.com) or find Gather55 on Open Table. Your dining experience will be memorable, unique and will help support our Hartford community.

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And we have one more surprise in store for November- we've added a few new bonus dishes created by our new **Head Chef, Vin Keola!** Vin's dishes will include **Seared Bok Choy with Sautéed Wild Mushroom**, split pea and miso hummus, roasted sesame and Thai basil oil; **Beef Wellington** with potato pavé, seared carrots, parsnip mash, beurre blanc sauce; **Chicken Piccata Milanese** in a panko parmesan crust, with capers lemon sauce, pappardelle pasta; and **Celery Root Steak** in a mushroom sauce with wilted spinach and frizzle onion. Yum!

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***Ps. Don't worry- many of our amazing favorites will still be on our upcoming November dinner menu (see below)!***



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

**MAKE A RESERVATION HERE**

## A well-deserved honor!

In late September, our very own Gather55 and Shared Kitchen Manager, Molly Reynolds, was one of the **Hartford Food System** honorees at their annual "Food Glorious Food" event. In her role helping with the creation and management of Gather55, she was honored for her "commitment to serving wholesome, affordable meals and fostering a sense of belonging." Congratulations to Molly on this well-deserved recognition! And congrats to the other honorees as well, all of who are connected to Hands On Hartford through community partnerships and other





## Labor Day Community Meal - a hit!



Last month, our **Labor Day community meal** turned out to be a joyful and connection-filled gathering with delicious food, that received RAVE reviews, and dozens of folks who shared their gratitude for such a fun and welcoming event. We provided hot meals of BBQ chicken, veggie burgers, various sides and a strawberry whipped cream dessert to 218 folks, including 53 seniors and 10 kiddos (plus many volunteers and staff). We also welcomed lots of volunteers, including a team from **Immanuel Congregational Church, UCC** and **Board members Vin Sukhraj and Marc Berube**. We are so grateful to everyone for their dedication to putting "caring into action" and celebrating the holiday with our Hartford neighbors.

## Staff Updates -

A Fond Farewell, Warm Welcomes & Awesome Advancements



We are excited to announce **Vin Keola**, left, is our new **Head Chef of Gather55** and, right, **Rob Maffucci**, our new **Director of Gather55 and Shared Kitchen**. We bid a fond (and bittersweet) farewell to our talented **Chef Jeremy Williams** (middle), who has been so instrumental in Gather55's first year of success in the evening and has just moved on to a new opportunity.



**Kadajah Williams**  
Day Center Specialist

(new hire)



**Hendrick Xiong-Calmes**  
Café Associate

(new hire)



**Julianne Alicé**  
Café Coordinator

(role change)



**Jennica Torres**  
Program Manager -  
Homeless Prevention and  
Food Access

(role change)



**Trevonn Coleman**  
Community Housing &  
Activity Coordinator

(role change)



**Carlos Cuevas**  
Human Resources  
Coordinator

(role change)



**Kate Shafer**  
Development Specialist

(role change)



**Kian O'Connor**  
Community Engagement  
Associate

(role change)



**Nat Wyse**  
Backpack Pantry Liaison

(role change)

## Positive Projects & Partnerships



[illegible]

A photograph of two women standing in a well-stocked pantry aisle. The woman on the left is wearing a red jacket and brown boots, and the woman on the right is wearing a patterned top and black pants. They are both holding a green envelope. The shelves are filled with various food items, including jars of jam, boxes of cereal, and bags of rice. A sign on the left shelf reads "Tinned Beans, Macaroni &amp; Rice" and another sign on the right shelf reads "Canned Tomatoes".

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!



Our new friends at **Infosys** in Hartford hosted a food drive with their generous staff and collected 76 lbs of nonperishable food for our community pantry in just one week, in honor of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday! So wonderful! Infosys locations around the country are donating to charities all over the nation; we are so honored to be the Hartford location's charity-recipient!



Over 50 members from **Leadership Greater Hartford's Quest2023 team** came to visit Hands On Hartford specifically to **learn about food insecurity** in our community and the many ways HOH is helping to support those in need. All 50 of these motivated professionals divided into smaller groups and **went on a tour of HOH**. To support our mission, they all also enjoyed a delicious **lunch provided by our Gather55** team (and took advantage of the unseasonably warm weather by eating outside on our picnic tables near our beautiful community garden). Pictured here are just some of the many LGH members - Celestine, Patsy, Michaela, Kathryn, and Chris - who all seemed to enjoy their experience. What a great visit from some of the area's brightest leaders!



If your group/business is interested in a similar experience, please reach out to Kelly via email [here](#) or call 860-706-1520 to make arrangements.

*If you'd like  
a recap of 2022,*





*Caring in  
Action = Community  
Impact*



our most recent  
Annual Report  
is available for  
review [here](#).

## Pantry Donations Still Needed



Did you know that we are now serving, on average, over **900 households a month in our MANNA Community pantry**? This number has nearly doubled over the last 2 years and makes it more difficult than ever to keep four shelves fully stocked each week.

We're in great need of **contacts for businesses, faith groups, community organizations, and grocery stores/markets** who you think would be willing to help collect food for us on an **ongoing basis** so we can continue to provide the same quantity and variety of foods to our pantry participants who rely on these groceries each month.

We're also looking for monthly "shelf-sponsors" to help fund a select shelf of our pantry! We'll even put your name on it!

Reach out to **Donna Colliton** at 860-706-1538 or email her [HERE](#) for more info or to let us know you, or a business you know, may be interested!

## 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:**

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



**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.***



PROUD AFFILIATE

**POINTS  
OF LIGHT**  
GLOBAL NETWORK





Visit our website



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