

## Fall 2024 News

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### A Time of Transition and Excitement

These are bittersweet and exciting times, as we bid our long-time Executive Director, Barbara A. Shaw, a fond farewell, and welcome our current Deputy Director, Janet Bermudez into the Executive Director role effective November 23. Below we share Barbara's reflection upon her retirement, as well as Janet's remarks upon accepting the "torch of leadership", which she's kept short – you'll be hearing a lot more from her in the coming months and years!

### A Special Message from Barbara A. Shaw upon Her Retirement

*"After nearly 23 years of serving, connecting, and being in community with the extended Hands On Hartford family, I face a new challenge: how to put into words all my thoughts and feelings as I retire as Executive Director of this amazing agency.*

*This past weekend I read through some of the entries in my Daily Gratitude*

*Journal (given to me by a friend and former HOH team member some years ago) and a few things stood out as the “stars in my gratitude sky”:*

- *How often my moments of gratitude have been about my work serving this community*
- *The inspiration I take from the extraordinary lives and resiliency of the folks I have connected with and served over these past years, who have trusted us with their struggles*
- *The joy I have felt as I have seen homes found or stabilized, health issues addressed, and food, glorious food, provided to thousands (!)*
- *How moved I have been by the caring and skilled HOH team members as they have worked so many long hours, walking often-difficult paths with folks in our community, and celebrating so many successes resulting from their care and compassion*
- *And my heartfelt thankfulness for the generous individuals and partners who share their time, skills and financial resources with us every single day – the comfort and warmth of knowing that all of this work is supported, every day and every hour, by our beloved community.*

**Continue reading Barbara's message [HERE](#).**



## **Remarks from Janet Bermudez as she transitions to Executive Director**

*"I am both excited and energized by the opportunity to lead this amazing agency into the future. I'm honored to be following in the footsteps of Barbara, who has been such a caring and effective leader, as well as those who came before her. And with the generous support of our volunteers, donors and partners, as well as the skill, care and compassion that our team brings, I know we will continue to have deep and lasting impacts on our neighbors in Hartford.*

*As I reflect on the opportunity to lead Hands On Hartford, I am deeply moved by the people we serve and the incredible individuals who provide our services. I think about our community and the importance of fostering a sense of belonging for all. I envision Hands On Hartford continuing to be a place where everyone is not only welcome, but can also bring their authentic selves.*

*I see our organization as one that consistently responds to the community's needs with compassion, dignity, and respect. It is my commitment that we will remain a pillar of support—a beacon of hope in Hartford—offering light and comfort to those who are struggling. Together, we will continue to ensure that Hands On Hartford is a place of healing, empowerment, and community for all who need us.*

*Stay tuned, in future newsletters, to hear more about my work with our team, and*

with all of you, in the new year and in these new times. And please know my door is always open – you can reach me at [jbermudez@handsonhartford.org](mailto:jbermudez@handsonhartford.org) or 860-706-1528 – I'd love a chance to connect."

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**Thursday Evening, October 17th was one to put in the history books for Hands On Hartford!**

**A great time was had by all at our annual Hands & Hearts event to help celebrate our 55th Anniversary and the retirement of our Executive Director, Barbara Shaw.**

**We wish to thank our corporate sponsors, auction donors, and most of all our community of supporters that made this such a successful and memorable evening!**



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 October 17, 2024 at the Connecticut Convention Center***, a huge success. We are grateful to announce that we surpassed our fundraising goal!

It was also such a fun night filled with live music by The Bernadettes, dancing, multi-cultural hors d'oeuvre stations (including a guest favorite "loaded mashed potato bar"), a commemorative video honoring Barbara Shaw's retirement, one of our largest silent auctions to date (with well over 100 items), a live auction, a beautiful spoken-word poetry performance, heartfelt speakers, a lively raise-the-paddle, and mingling time during our cocktail hour with so many of our amazing volunteers, staff and community supporters that have shared in our mission for the past 55 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!

For those of you who missed our event, please enjoy this beautiful commemorative spoken-word poem, created by Manchester's talented Poet Laureate, Nadia Sims, in honor of our 55th anniversary. **Read Nadia's Poem [HERE](#).**



## Faith in Action

Thank you to the following faith-based partners for their generous support of our *Hands & Hearts Together* celebration:



CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH



IN THE CITY FOR GOOD

## Save These Dates!

**Hands On Hartford**  
*Invites you to our Thanksgiving Holiday Meal!*  
Join us for this completely **FREE** event!  
Everyone is welcome & no reservations required!

**Thursday, November 28, 2024**  
Doors open: 10:00am for coffee & snacks  
Meal served: 11:00am-1:30pm  
(dine-in or take it to-go)

**Menu:**  
TURKEY BREAST (OR VEGETARIAN OPTION), STUFFING,  
MASHED POTATOES WITH GRAVY, VEGETABLES,  
GREEN SALAD, DINNER ROLLS & PIE

Located at: Hands On Hartford's Center for Community  
55 Bartholomew Ave | Hartford, CT  
(off Park Street, two blocks west of Pope Park)  
Call 860.728.3201 with questions.

\*Thank you to Talcott Financial Group for your sponsorship!  
\*Gifts of warmth for kids & adults generously sponsored by  
CGI Technologies & Solutions Inc. and Hartford Steam Boiler

\*Bus Passes available in case of inclement weather.

**TALCOTT FINANCIAL GROUP**  
**Hands On Hartford**  
**CGI**

Please help us  
spread the word!

We hope you'll join us for our next **free community holiday meal** on **Thurs, November 28th** here at Hands On Hartford in celebration of Thanksgiving!

Enjoy getting to know your neighbors over delicious food and fellowship. **Everyone is welcome** and we are offering both meals to-go or dining inside.

Our **menu** will include turkey breast (or veggie option), stuffing, mashed potatoes with gravy, vegetables, green salad, dinner rolls and pie!

Doors open at **10:00am** for coffee and snacks and our meal is served from **11:00am-1:30pm**.

We'd like to thank **Talcott Financial Group** for their generous meal sponsorship and **CGI & HSB** for sponsoring 500 bags full of gifts of warmth for children and adults!

At **The Paper Store**, a family-owned and operated business, they believe in the power of giving back. Each November, their "Gift of Giving" event raises money for local food pantries, shelters, and schools. To date, they've raised more than \$300,000 for charity! HOH is proud to have been invited to join as a beneficiary this year. If you're looking for a stocking stuffer this

HELP SUPPORT  
**HANDS ON HARTFORD**  
at The Paper Store's

## Gift of Giving

ANNUAL CHARITY EVENT

IN-STORE NOV. 25 - DEC. 1

When you buy their 2024  
Gift of Giving ornament for \$3.99,  
\$1 is donated to us AND you get

# 20% off

your entire purchase\*  
during your visit!

the paper store® | Bishops Corner  
6 Sims Rd, West Hartford, CT



\*Exclusions apply. See store or visit [www.thepaperstore.com/giving](http://www.thepaperstore.com/giving) for more details.

holiday season that also supports  
our mission, [please consider  
purchasing their 2024 "Gift of Giving"  
commemorative ornament from the  
West Hartford location at 6 Sims Rd  
\(Bishops Corner\) this month!](#)

## Honoring Indigenous People's Day



In honor of **Indigenous People's Day** last month, our **Food Access Specialist, Danielle**, highlighted a special dish for our collection of "Pantry-Inspired Meals". Utilizing items featured in our MANNA Community Pantry, Danielle put together **"Three Sisters Stew"**, highlighting three native ingredients. A combination of butternut squash, corn, and beans were incorporated. These foods have been cultivated by Indigenous peoples as part of their diets for thousands of years. Onions, chopped zucchini, and carrots can also be added, all of which are food items currently featured in our Pantry!

There are tons of recipes online to try with different ingredients. One of our favorites can be found [HERE](#).

We encourage you to join us in recognizing the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of our Indigenous communities.

## Gather55 Dinner Updates



Gather55's  
November  
Guest Chef:  
Israel Sanchez



Featured dishes:

Queso Fundido  
Chicken Mole Poblano  
Tres Leches Cake



Follow our Facebook page [HERE](#) and our IG page [HERE](#).

**MAKE A RESERVATION OR ORDER DELIVERY  
HERE!**

## Help Fill a Child's Heart and Backpack!



**Our kids' backpack nutrition program  
is in need of the following foods:**

- Mac & Cheese cups
- Small Cans of Chicken Noodle
- or Mixed Veggie Soup (with pull lid)
- 100% Juice Boxes
- Oatmeal packets
- Goldfish crackers
- Pretzel Goldfish Crackers
- Small non-sugary boxes of cereal
- Fruit bars
- Fresh Fruit (apples & oranges)
- Small bags of Smartfood popcorn
- Chocolate Graham Bears
- Chocolate Chip Granola Bars
- Shelf-Stable Milk

We're also looking for **sponsors for our**



**special monthly seasonal enhancements**, for example hot cocoa kits, school supplies, gifts of warmth, coloring books, seed starter kits, etc. To schedule a drop-off, contact Kelly at [kdougherty@handsonhartford.org](mailto:kdougherty@handsonhartford.org).

## Positive Projects and Partnerships

Hands On Hartford staff **Kelly Dougherty and Stephanie Boyce**, along with Faces speaker **Ralph Gagliardo**, were honored to host a Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau event and participate in a unique, student-led panel discussion, along with **Connecticut Public's Housing Reporter Abigail Brone**, focusing on housing insecurity and homelessness in CT, for an audience of over 1,000 students and faculty this past September at the prestigious **Choate Rosemary High School**. The event was thought-provoking and widely praised and provided Hands On Hartford an amazing opportunity to highlight the critical issues surrounding housing in our state while preparing and educating our future, and current, leaders and change-makers.

*For those interested in scheduling a Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau event or interested in hosting a panel discussion, please visit our website and fill out an interest form [HERE!](#)*



A heartfelt thank you to **Hartford HealthCare's Community Pharmacy** for their generous donation of nonperishable breakfast foods and nearly 600 full-size toiletry items for our MANNA community pantry! We were thrilled for both of these gifts because our pantry runs out of breakfast items fairly quickly AND basic care items, like shampoo, shaving cream, razors, deodorant, body lotion, sunscreen and more are typically expensive and SNAP benefits do not cover these much-needed items! We truly appreciate their support and commitment to helping our community.





A huge thank you to our friends from **NAAIA National** who made a donation of over **1,000 hats, scarves, gloves and hand-warmers** to keep our Hartford neighbors warm as winter approaches. This **“Warm Hands Warm Hearts”** collection is such a kind and compassionate gift! If you'd like to make a "gifts of warmth" donation, or any other in-kind gift, please consider reaching out to Kelly at [kdougherty@handsonhartford.org](mailto:kdougherty@handsonhartford.org) to schedule a drop-off time (we can also provide a flyer to help in your efforts).



Every week in our Community Pantry and Day Center, we are lucky to have students from the University of St. Joseph offering their services to our participants. **This semester, we have four awesome students - Olivia, Marissa, Christina, and Breanna!**

They also made a generous donation of fresh produce to our Community Pantry; their kindness and commitment to serving the community makes a real difference in the lives of those we support. We thank them for their hard work and compassion!



We are so grateful to our corporate partner, **Travelers**, who partnered with the nonprofit **"Blessings in a Backpack"**, to host two sorting and packing events with dozens of their employees, followed by 2 large donations of snacks and nonperishable meals totaling nearly 1,800 pounds (around 60 large bins worth) for our kids' Backpack Nutrition Program. What an incredible effort and collaboration!

The best part was getting to pick up these generous donations using the large van they gifted to us last year!

A big shout out and THANK YOU to our friend and **Travelers Community Relations Consultant, Roxanne Ringuette**, for coordinating this initiative and to our **Board Member and Travelers' Vice President of Billing and Receivables Management, Lisa Cameron**, for presenting to the group about Hands On Hartford and our kids' Backpack Nutrition Program.







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**Please help us welcome our new team members!**



**Craig Hazel**  
*Senior Manager of Finance*



**Rodrigo Giraldo Salvador**  
*Backpack and Pantry Liaison*

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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:**

- Tenant Assistant - Weekends - Part Time
  - Homeless Outreach Nurse
  - Tenant Assistant- Second Shift

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

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## 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



Hands On Hartford, Inc. | 55 Bartholomew Avenue | Hartford, CT 06106 US

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