Community Meals News
Expanded hours, expanded services, expanded volunteer opportunities and expanded impact

With the generous support of a $111,600 grant from Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, we have taken steps to expand the impact of our MANNA Community Meals Program, located at space donated by Christ Church Cathedral. The program is now open to guests from 9am—7pm on Mondays, and from 9am—3:30pm Tuesdays through Thursdays. A hearty continental breakfast and hot lunch are served Monday through Thursday, and dinner is also served on Mondays. These expanded hours will also be very helpful to guests who are homeless, offering them a welcoming, warm and safe space to spend time during the day.

Importantly, expanded services are focused on housing and health assistance. By providing more comprehensive services around food, housing and health, we are able to more sustainably impact those we serve. A Program Navigator will now work with guests to assess housing needs, help them apply for housing through the Coordinated Access Network (CAN), help them access shelter and other basic needs.

We are also increasing basic health services and support at Community Meals. University of Saint Joseph student nurses have been providing glucose and blood pressure checks for guests at Community Meals for a number of years. Through this partnership, we have learned the importance of meeting clients where they are and establishing a relationship of trust as a method of connecting folks to more comprehensive health care. Going forward, we are also collaborating with other health care providers to increase the services available at Community Meals, including HIV screening and more thorough basic health screening.

We are so grateful to Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Christ Church Cathedral, and our many generous volunteers, for their partnership and support of our Hartford neighbors.

Along with this expansion, there are, of course, expanded volunteer opportunities. Currently, we are looking for groups of 4-8 people to serve meals on Thursdays and groups of 1-3 people to donate and/or serve breakfast Monday through Thursday. For more information about volunteering, email volunteering@handsonhartford.org.

Upcoming Events: For more information, contact Kate at kshafer@handsonhartford.org

- **Sunday, April 21:** Easter Sunday Community Meal
- **Saturday, April 27:** Foodshare’s Walk Against Hunger. Join the Hands On Hartford Team and support our MANNA food programs: https://bit.ly/2CBtWNd
- **Monday, May 27:** Memorial Day Community Meal
Faith In Action

March marked the opening of a satellite food pantry at Emanuel Lutheran Church, one of our founding congregations and a 50-year partner in our working serving Hartford. Staff from Hands On Hartford worked with Emanuel Lutheran staff and volunteers to help folks choose food for their families. The new satellite pantry will be open one Saturday each month, expanding the reach of this important food security assistance.

Our friends from Allen Chapel AME Church in Hartford joined us as volunteers for one final Tuesday evening meal at Community Meals. They have been so generous in supporting this program and our guests and we are happy to report that they will continue to share their time with us at other times during the week. It is inspiring to see this wonderful congregation putting their faith into action.

2019 Volunteer Recognition Event

The March Volunteer Recognition Event was both fun and moving, as we celebrated the tremendous accomplishments and commitment of the many devoted Hands On Hartford volunteers. Award winners this year were Meghan Chasse (R. Regner and Carolyn S. Arvidson Exemplary Volunteer Award), Prudential (Corporate Volunteer Award), The Gengras Center School (School Volunteer Award), Temple Beth Hillel (Faith Group Volunteer Award), The Greater Hartford Chapter of Jack & Jill of America, Inc. (Civic Volunteer Award), the Café “Family” of Robert Henderson, Sal Marano, David Panagrosso, Victoria Park and Linda Wayman (Family Volunteer Award), and Aida Mansoor, Marianne Parker Brown, Laurie Rapkin and Vox Church (Superhero Award).

Have you been wishing for a comprehensive description of all of the action at Hands On Hartford’s Center for Community? Look no more! Our friend Don Shaw has put together a great blog post on his Red Truck Stonecatcher blog covering all things Hands On Hartford, and you can see it here: http://www.redtruckstonecatcher.com/2019/03/celebrating-fifty-years-of-hands-on.html

A bit from Don’s blog: This blog is a forum to highlight, celebrate and share the good works of people and organizations making our world a better place, especially those who are dedicated to catching the hurtful stones we are prone to cast at, or throw in the path of, the marginalized, vulnerable and victimized among us. Be a stonecatcher!

We’re honored to be highlighted in Don’s blog and grateful for his help in spreading the word.
**We all have our hands on Hartford!**

**Max Cares Foundation** has provided $5,000 in funding to support kids through our weekend Backpack Nutrition Program, and to support our community kitchen programs (including our Shared Use Kitchen, Café at Fifty-Five and Caterers Who Care, and holiday meals for the community)! We send our thanks to Max Cares for their generosity and partnership in taking care of our Hartford neighbors.

**Faces Of Homelessness** held a public presentation, "Where the Heart Is: Four Journeys Through Homelessness," at the **Hartford Public Library**. Four courageous speakers shared their stories with candor, grace and eloquence. They reached out and touched the hearts and minds of the large audience. For more information about this program, including how you can schedule an event, contact Anne Goshdigian at agoshdigian@handsonhartford.org.

Chef Marcel (left) and Lead Cook Chris Nshimye connected with the CT chapter of **Food Rescue US** to donate 50 left-over meals to a shelter without a kitchen. We’re always looking for ways to cut down on waste, so we’re proud to say we are also customers of **Blue Earth Compost**, whose mission is to make composting easier and more accessible in Connecticut, so we can improve our air, water, and soil.

We had a blast at a great team-building and food collection event with **Gems Sensors and Controls**. They donated about 700 pounds of food and supplies for our programs, and made a financial donation on top of that! Their team-building idea: groups built mini-golf holes using the donated food and lots of tape (and pink flamingos) and then held a mini-golf competition! We're so grateful for the fun and support.
Hands On Hartford Programs

- **MANNA Food Programs**: Community Meals, Community Pantry, and Backpack Nutrition Program
- **HOH Neighborhood Services**: homelessness prevention, Operation Fuel, and health & nutrition services
- **HOH Housing**: supportive housing services
- **Faces of Homelessness**: Speakers’ Bureau
- **Community Engagement**: volunteer placement, customized community service projects and immersions.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

**Food runner.** 2 times/month. Pick up food at Foodshare in Bloomfield and deliver to the newly established satellite pantry at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford. Flexible dates and times.

**Lunch at Community Meals.** One-time opportunity. Serve lunch on Thursday from 11:30am – 1:30pm at 45 Church Street in Hartford. Many Thursdays available. Seeking group of 4-8 volunteers.

**Easter Meal Volunteers:** Sunday, April 21, 8:45am—2:30pm, set up, food preparation, serving and engaging with guests, running games and activities, and event clean-up. A wonderful way to celebrate the season and share the Easter Holiday with neighbors in Hartford.

The Café at Fifty-Five is open Tuesday-Friday, 7:30am-2:30pm, here at 55 Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford.

**Caterers Who Care** provides on-site and off-site catering, including a broad selection of breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items with an emphasis on our ability to customize our selections to fit groups from a handful to hundreds, and accommodate your budget. **Check out our new catering menu at our website!**

Our **Community Kitchen** also operates as a shared use kitchen, where members use the kitchen and all of its equipment on an hourly basis—ideal for small culinary businesses, start-ups, and food trucks/carts.

The Café, Caterers Who Care and Shared Use Kitchen all support Hands On Hartford direct service programs.

For more information contact Molly Reynolds at 860-706-1537 or mreynolds@handsonhartford.org.

For information about volunteering and customized service projects, contact Wanda at 860-706-1507 or wguzman@handsonhartford.org.

For more information about our programs, financial and in-kind support or joining our Legacy Society, contact Kate at kshafer@handsonhartford.org, or 860-706-1505.

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