Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! 2020 is the year we embark upon our sixth decade changing lives in Hartford, and we start this year with energy, hopeful anticipation, and gratitude for the support of the many, many community members who join us in our work. After celebrating an amazing 50th anniversary year, thanks to your support we are off and running (with hardly a moment to catch our collective breath) to continue to increase and improve the services we provide.

We are looking forward to seeing the impact of our “small miracles” work—providing more assistance than ever with the special support of Center Church in Hartford and Farmington Bank Community Foundation, ensuring that more of our neighbors’ life situations don’t become destabilizing life crises. The Culinary Collaborative promises to assist more of our Shared Kitchen Members to get their evolving businesses off and running. Our new BFF Tyler Anderson of Millwright’s, Square Peg Pizza and more has some amazing events to support our work planned for this year. And we’ll be offering more service learning opportunities to all sorts of groups through immersive community service experiences.

In this newsletter, you’ll get a flavor of the community engagement projects, community support and events we are engaged in. Also, we have a bunch of new faces on the team and some changed roles which we highlight. We continue to develop and enhance our partnerships with many groups, including our friends of faith, many of whom have been with us from the beginning. And you can read about the many ways, big and small, you can join us and support the folks we serve.

With gratitude and great hope for a powerful 2020,

Barbara A. Shaw, LCSW
Executive Director

Rev. Donna K. Manocchio
Board Chairperson

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Service Learning Immersion

Students from University of Rhode Island joined us in January for an overnight service learning immersion. During the time they spent with us, they served a meal at our Community Meals and Day Program and played bingo with our guests. They visited (and danced) with folks at the Day-Break adult day center. They created special Valentine’s Day gift bags for the kids in our Backpack Nutrition Program. They also participated in a Feet On The Street tour with our Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Bureau, where they got a sense of what life is like for those experiencing homelessness. Finally, our former social work intern Jamie Rosenblatt gave a special presentation focused on climate change and its particular impact on low income individuals and families. It was a wonderful opportunity to get “hands on” and reflect on change that is needed in our world. For information about how you can schedule an immersion event for your group, contact Geoff Luxenberg at gluxenberg@handsonhartford.org.
Hands On Hartford is excited to be deepening our decades-long partnership with First Church of Christ in Hartford/Center Church, living out our shared ministry in new ways. We are honored and grateful to be able to share additional assistance funds with the community in need through our Neighborhood Services and Community Meals Programs. Together, we are working to stabilize lives and to break down barriers to success.

Hats off to Center Church!

**New Faces, New Roles**

**Rick Chaney** is Lead Custodian at 55 Bartholomew Avenue and joined us in November. Efficient and hard-working, he’s always ready with a friendly greeting, and happy to help out with our “heavy lifts.”

**Kim Zajac** joined the team in November and is our Bookkeeper, working closely with Pam Fitzgerald. She jumped right into the fall festivities, helping set up and staff the Toy Shoppe celebration.

**Bianca Almanzar** was promoted to Basic Needs Specialist in January. She has a knowledgeable, kind and caring approach to clients and is always ready to reach out to help other team members.

**Roberto Alamo** is a welcomed addition to the Community Meals team. He joined Hands On Hartford last September and his work as Peacekeeper/Custodian makes a huge difference to all of us and our guests.

Welcome **Geoff Luxenberg**, our new Program Manager for Community Engagement. Geoff came aboard in January, a perfect time to collaborate in planning this year’s engagement activities. Geoff is also a State Representative for the Town of Manchester.

We are delighted to announce that **Stacey Tyler** has joined the Café and Catering team as Lead Cook. Her culinary skills are sure to please and the whole team (including Andy Proctor, Megyn Craine and Daryl Granville) is better than ever.
We all have our hands on Hartford!

ESPN employees worked with our Community Engagement team on a special project focused on Martin Luther King, Jr., at Breakthrough Magnet North Elementary School in Hartford.

In their annual report to us, we learned from Blue Earth Compost that Hands On Hartford's has diverted 36,050 lbs. of food scraps from the incinerator. This food is from our Café and catering operations, Kitchen-to-Pantry project, and our pantry.

HOH Team Member Stephanie Boyce participated in CT Coalition to End Homelessness’s Point In Time count, a one-night count of homeless people and families in Connecticut. She says, “we had wonderful conversations regarding the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and what is currently being done.”

This note from a guest says it all - why we do what we do at our Community Meals and Day Program. We all need a little help from a friend now and then.

The Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Bureau enjoyed a well-deserved appreciation lunch in January. These courageous folks are open and honest about what life is like when you are homeless, and how challenging even little hurdles become.

We were honored to receive a $3,000 grant from United Fresh Start Foundation to support our Kitchen-to-Pantry project. This project keeps fresh fruit and veggies on the table and helps improve nutrition and good health for children in need.
The Café at Fifty-Five is open Tuesday-Friday, 7:30am-2:30pm, here at 55 Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford. Now serving wine and beer—ask to see our wine and beer list!

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 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.

Hands On Hartford has been serving the Hartford community for fifty years. We are a nonprofit social services agency that increases food security and nutrition, improves health and provides housing while we engage volunteers and connect communities.

We welcome volunteers and encourage folks to stop by to visit to see our work in action.

To arrange for a visit, make a donation, or learn about Hands On Hartford’s legacy society, contact Kate Shafer at kshafer@handsonhartford.org or 860-706-1505.

To learn about volunteering with Hands On Hartford, contact our volunteer coordinators at volunteering@handsonhartford.org or 860-706-1522.