Spring 2020 News

A Note from our Executive Director:

Dear Friends,

"I've never had to ask for help before. I was so embarrassed to come here. God bless you." These are the words spoken, with tears in her eyes, by a woman visiting our pantry for the first time. Folks who have been just fine until now are struggling. We are all finding these days and weeks and months challenging - adjusting to physical distancing and face-masks, shopping in the early hours to find toilet paper, missing loved ones, cancelling life celebrations. It's a lot. But it's often so much harder for the guests and clients we see. Not having a safe place to stay during the day. Not having savings to carry a family through until the unemployment check arrives. Not knowing where the next meal will come from. Our hearts go out to neighbors who are now truly struggling to survive. And we know your hearts are with us. It's clear from the calls and letters and notes we
have received from you, from the amazing financial donations we have received, from the food and the face masks and rolls of toilet paper that you have brought. **One thing is certain - this is a community that cares.** Our community is strong and we are grateful to be a part of it.

Be well and stay safe,

*Barbara*

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**SEEN! At the Hands On Hartford Center for Community**

What a community! Team members are working hard on the front lines to keep our community strong. Folks are bringing donations of food, toiletries, socks, face masks, toilet paper - you name it, and it just keeps coming. Thank you to everyone - this is truly a team effort.
Donations from Freshpoint and many others ensure that our pantry families are getting lots of healthy food, along with milk and eggs and toilet paper.

Pre-bagged groceries are the safest option at the MANNA Community Pantry.

Donessia is always ready with socks (thank you Bombas), toiletry items and assistance for everyone who turns to us for help.

Thank you MiZZI Cosmetics for emergency hand sanitizer for our Housing Case Managers.

Meals to go at lunch from Community Meals (100 a day), courtesy of our good friends at Travelers.
Celebrating our Friends in Faith

With faith groups unable to conduct in-person services (although so many are live-streaming - isn’t technology wonderful), we have been blown away by our faith group friends' continued generosity and loyalty especially during the Coronavirus crisis over the past month. Financial and in-kind gifts are keeping our programs strong and reminding us of the love and power behind all the work we do. Letters and emails from faith groups have raised our spirits and strengthened our commitment to this community. While the sheer number of groups is too large to list here, we would like to say a special thank you to Asylum Hill Congregational Church, First Church of Christ in Glastonbury, Immanuel Congregational Church, Emanuel Lutheran Church, Central Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, First Church Simsbury and Flagg Road United Church of Christ for their special support.

FUN STUFF HAPPENING IN THE CLOUD  #HaveFunDoGood

Board member Lisa Cameron hosted a virtual concert via Zoom last Thursday, as a fundraiser for Hands On Hartford. With great music courtesy of Jim Morgan, Marialaina Gelineau and twins Aidan and Dermot MacMillan, everyone had a great time and over $1,500 was raised to support folks in need of help during these challenging times.
One of our newest Shared Kitchen Members (and a dear and creative friend) Chef Ani Robaina is offering private interactive online cooking and wine tasting classes, and donating 50% of the proceeds of the wine tasting classes to Hands On Hartford. Another great way to have fun and do good. For more information, visit events@anistable.com or call 860-767-0360.

Our good friend, artist Kate Emery, is auctioning her original piece, Distant Warmth, and donating 75% of the proceeds to Hands On Hartford. Bids will be accepted online at KateEmery.com/auctions through midnight on April 30, 2020 - don't miss your opportunity to put in your bid. The piece is gorgeous with its shades of warm earth, dove gray, spun cloud and gold - you can also see a photo of this 28x22 inch painting on her website at KateEmery.com.

Terry Wolfisch Cole, an extraordinary storyteller and Moth GrandSLAM champion, is hosting a virtual edition of Tell Me Another on May 1 at 8:00pm. The event is free, and donations to support Hands On Hartford will be accepted. Visit Terry's Tell Me Another website to register.

STORIES OF RESILIENCE

648 families visited our MANNA Community Pantry in March. These families are more than just numbers to us - they are folks who are determined to make it despite increasingly tough times. Parents who are committed to getting healthy foods for their kids. Seniors taking it a day at a time, and looking for joy in each of those days. Jennifer came this month for groceries for herself and her two children. One of her children has a medical disorder that requires
round the clock care and the other child has autism. She had to quit her job after her son's caregiver moved away. And with schools out, she is now not only a parent, but a home health aide and teacher to her kids. Many of us are in this boat - trying to juggle new responsibilities. But Jennifer doesn't have any rainy-day savings to help her weather the storm. **We are so grateful** that with the support of so many in this community, we are able to help Jennifer with groceries, help her figure out how to get her stimulus check, and help her make calls to find a new caregiver for her son. She's not quitting and neither are we.

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**VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS**

Over the past month, the number of volunteers at our Center for Community is greatly reduced for our mutual health and safety. We are anxiously awaiting the day when we can welcome everyone back - and we sure do miss everyone's help, energy and spirit. But thinking back to the beginning of March, we remember with joy the awards given to some amazing volunteer at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Event:

- **CREC Impact Academy** (School Volunteer Award)
- **First Church of Christ, Glastonbury** (Faith Volunteer Award)
- **Hands On Hartford Board of Directors** (Civic Volunteer Award),
- **The "Backpack Family"** of Andrew May, Akiko Hiratsuka, Brittny Allen, Jessica Probolus and Tam Nguyen (Family Volunteer Award)
- **Joe Krystofalski, Gisele Gamrat, Kevin Conway and Gerald Cassell** (Superhero Award)
- **Helen Frye** (R. Regner and Carolyn S. Arvidson Exemplary Volunteer Award)

To ALL of our volunteers, we thank you, we honor you, and please know how much we treasure you. **Happy National Volunteer Appreciation Month!**
Join the Hands On Hartford Team

We're hiring!!

Review our Job Openings here.

Please share this information with anyone you know looking for a great community-oriented team.

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?

Go shopping! If you're an online amazon shopper, be sure to start your shopping at smile.amazon.com and select Hands On Hartford as your charity. .5% of eligible purchases will automatically go to Hands On Hartford.

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, click "Donate Now" or mail your check to Hands On Hartford, 55 Bartholomew Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106. Our inkind donation wish-list is HERE.

Or contact Kate Shafer at kshafer@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.