

National Arts 2003

National Arts Program Encourages, Rewards, Artistic Talent

With entries from nearly 700 people, and a centralized location for easy viewing, participants and supporters agreed that CRT's 2003 National Arts Program was one of the best to date.

An annual juried competition, the National Arts Program seeks to encourage an appreciation and love of the arts by allowing artists of all ages and abilities to participate in a juried contest, and also to display their work.

"All of the art that's entered was displayed this year at Capital Community College's new downtown campus," said CRT's President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo. "That meant that everyone attending our fundraising cocktail reception and the awards ceremony got a chance to look at all the art in all divisions."

Nearly 100 participants won \$7,500 in cash, with awards based on age and medium, and level of experience.

Any Connecticut resident over the age of 6 may participate in National Arts. Artwork is dropped off at CRT's Hartford office in January, and a cocktail fundraising reception and awards ceremony take place in February. All art entered is publicly displayed through February.

CRT's National Arts Program is sponsored by the Community Renewal Team Inc. and the National Arts Program Foundation. For dates and information about next year's National Arts Program, please call (860) 560-5471.



Participants say...

"The show was very exciting for me as I have never displayed my art in this fashion before. Thank you!"



and...

"This program was a turning point in my daughter's life."

CRT's Income Tax Assistance: \$630,000 Back to Hartford Economy

More than \$630,000 is circulating in Connecticut's economy due to income tax returns prepared and filed so far for residents by the Community Renewal Team.

CRT has been providing free tax preparation services, encouraging people to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit and other credits. Volunteers and CRT staff went

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CRT Receives \$1.3 Million in HUD Awards

CRT has received two major new awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to create a centralized information system for Hartford homeless shelters and to provide permanent supportive housing in East Hartford, West Hartford, and Bloomfield.

HUD also awarded CRT \$565,000 to continue operating the Supportive Housing Collaborative, which provides housing and supports for up to two years for homeless families.

The permanent housing project, which will create 12 units of permanent housing with supports and be available to families who were formerly homeless, received \$621,535 over three years.

The Homeless Information Management System, which will create and administer a system of tracking and measuring homelessness in numerous city shelters, will receive \$111,720 over two years.

"These projects will go a long way towards creating solutions to homelessness, and to helping participants become self-sufficient and improving the quality of their lives," said Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Office Lena Rodriguez. "They are going to help a lot of people."

Look, Mom!



Celinete Garcia visits Lending Library at the Douglas Street ECE Center classroom with her daughter Shelby, 3½. The library lets children and parents choose books to take home and was made possible by a grant from Reading Is Fundamental. "She loves reading with us at home. She's getting very good and it really makes her imagination grow," said Garcia. "We all sit together and read at night." All of CRT's Head Start classrooms have similar libraries for parents and children.

...Tax Preparation

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through a brief Internal Revenue Service training to become certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistants; using software provided by the IRS, they have been preparing tax returns for hundreds of residents in Hartford and Middletown.

"This program has been a tremendous service to the community," said CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo. "We're putting money back into people's pockets, and encouraging them to think about how to use it to build assets for their futures."

The tax preparation program, which began in February and will run through April 15, is offered at six sites in Hartford and Middletown.

"When someone comes to us for tax assistance, we tell them about other CRT programs, like energy assistance, or the Individual Development Accounts, or Head Start," said Lena Rodriguez, CRT's Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer. "There's a lot anyone can do to build assets, and we want to share that information."

Paid tax preparers, Rodriguez added, charge a fee for preparation and filing, and may charge interest on the refund amount if clients opt for an instant refund. "CRT charges nothing, and we will make sure people know about the EITC and other options."

CRT has worked closely with the IRS, the UConn Law Clinic, and other service providers to carry out the program.

"CRT has picked up the ball running," said Don Frank, a Senior Tax Specialist with the IRS, after visiting two CRT sites this March. "You've shown your commitment again and again, and I'm glad to be working with you."

For information on CRT's tax preparation program, call (860) 560-5611.



Thanks, CRT!

I am a member of the East Granby Congregational Church and came across your name through our monthly church beacon. I'd like to commend Carmen Rodriguez, one of your employees. What a lovely person! For the past year, my family has seen difficult times. I was referred to CRT and when I made the phone call, I was fortunate to have Ms. Rodriguez answer. I told her of our situation and she immediately directed me to the resources that were available to our family. I was actually able to apply and receive some of the assistance that she made me aware of. She went as far as to follow-up with me after our initial call. What a hardworking, compassionate and pleasant woman! She is a Godsend. Our thanks to both you and Ms. Rodriguez for the dedication and energy you bring to our communities.

Sincerely,
Nadine P. Hoerle

Recently at CRT

Wild Oaks Donation

Donating \$2,300 to CRT are Jessica Kosciol, left, Marketing Manager of Wild Oats, at the Elmwood Community Center, a CRT Senior Community Cafe in West Hartford. With Kosciol are the Cafe's Manager June O'Neil, Meal Site Receptionist Louise Carlson, and CRT's Development Director Nancy Shapiro. The money will be used for CRT's nutrition program, which serves more than 700 Meals on Wheels to homebound seniors as well as preparing healthy meals for children in Head Start and for Senior Community Cafes.



Nutrition Breakfast

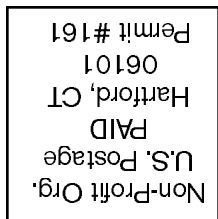
Public health, nutrition, and obesity were the topics of CRT's most recent Breakfast Forum, April 7. Speakers described the epidemic of obesity in America and the fact that even in Connecticut, many residents face hunger on a regular basis. Participants included public health officials and reserhers, advocates, service providers, and the public. For information, please call (860) 560-5471.



Community Resource Fair

CRT's annual Resource Fair, organized by its Early Care and Education Department, drew hundreds of parents to learn about services and resources in the community. Said Milagros Salgado of Hartford: "I came here to find information on programs for my children, insurance, and housing and I did. I am grateful to CRT for providing such services as the community resource fair."





Community Renewal Team Inc.
555 Windsor Street
Hartford, CT 06120



How Can You Help

Your tax-deductible donation helps people and families become self-sufficient and thrive. More than 90 cents of every dollar goes directly to clients and programs.

Send your **contributions** to CRT's Development Office, 555 Windsor St., Hartford, CT, 06120, or call (860) 560-5471.

How Can You Get Help

CRT can assist you in finding food, employment training, housing, weatherization, and other services. We may be able to suggest other ways to help.

Find out more by calling CRT's Hartford office, (860) 560-5600, or CRT's Middletown office, (860) 347-4465.

Serving Thousands:

CRT's Energy Assistance Season Draws to a Close

At the end of April, CRT's 2002-2003 Energy Assistance program will draw to a close. With a presence in more than 40 towns, CRT took applications from more than 22,000 individuals and families this winter. If they qualify based on income guidelines, people get help paying winter heating bills, with payments generally made directly to the fuel vendor. "Without this program, I'd be choosing between food and heat," one client said. **"It's a godsend. Thank you CRT!"**

CRTimes is a publication of the Community Renewal Team, Inc.

Incorporated in 1963, CRT is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing poverty. Programs in Hartford and Middlesex Counties help low-income and disadvantaged people and families become self-sufficient.

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Preparing Our Community to Meet Life's Challenges