

Teaching Children, Reaching Families

With 300 people in attendance, the Friends of CRT raised \$20,000 for the Early Care and Education Literacy program at CRT's Seventh Annual teaching Children, Reaching Families Benefit Dinner.

The May 14 event honored Middletown Mayor Domenique Thornton, shown in top photo with Hartford Courant Columnist Stan Simpson, left, and Anthony Amato, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools.

In the bottom photo, recipients of the Drs. Conrad G. and Claudia L. Mallet Scholarships accept their awards, presented by the Mallets. The scholarships are given each year to CRT Early Care and Education Staff who are furthering their education.



Dr. Paul Copes, Director of CRT's ECE Program, reads to children at the Eric. D. Coleman Center.

DRIF Day



An Essex St. student selects a book.



Another student at the Essex St. ECE enjoys the party

The first book giveaway for CRT's Reading is Fundamental Day involved more than just sending children home with a new book.

At each CRT Early Care and Education Center, there was reading. There were clowns. There were dignitaries, and speeches, and candy, and bubbles.

And each child got to choose which book they wanted to take home.

"Early experience with books and literacy is a critical part of the Head Start curriculum," said Debbie Cawley, CRT's Literacy Coordinator, who helped secure the grant and plan the event. "Being able to send children home with books reinforces everything we do in the classroom, and makes reading come alive."

The grant, from Reading is Fundamental, will buy two books for each child in CRT Head Start centers over the course of a year, as well as establishing a library in each classroom.

St. Ann Cares Renovates CRT Shelters

There was the selection - visiting the shelters, interviewing staff and clients. There was the planning - more visits, measuring, planning, buying materials and supplies. There was organizing - recruiting volunteers, assigning tasks, timing, transportation.

But when it was over, St. Ann Cares 2002 had completely renovated two shelters for the homeless, leaving them clean, bright, and welcoming.

“These people know you care about them.”

Carol Walter, CRT

The Church of St. Ann in Avon, in conjunction with AmeriCares, brought 140 volunteers to the East Hartford Community Shelter and to McKinney Shelter in Hartford May 4, completing dozens of large and small renovation projects.

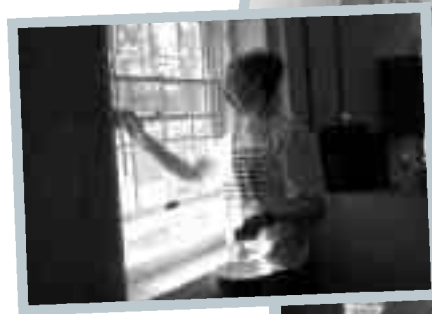
It was a day of intense work, with volunteers arriving and departing in buses, shelter residents working alongside volunteers, and supplies being brought by the truckload.

“You really just set it up and allow it to happen,” said Ray Juros of St Ann, who planned the event. “All the people here just want to do good.”

“It’s really an incredible project,” agreed volunteer Clark. “The amount of commitment and time is incredible. But you get more out of it than you put in.”

At McKinney, projects included a new floor, a new stove and kitchen ceiling, a new paved walkway outside the shelter, new paint in many areas, new grouting and tile in the bathrooms. At the East Hartford shelter, there was fresh paint in most rooms, several new offices built, kitchens and bathrooms gutted and renovated, and painting outside. Both sites also had new shrubs planted and other landscape work.

“This morning, 140 people woke up in our homeless shelters and didn’t know that anyone cared about them,” CRT Assistant Vice President Carol Walter told volunteers at a dinner after the workday. “Now they know differently. You’ve made an incredible difference with the work you’ve done today.”



Glastonbury Couple Celebrates with Gifts for CRT

When Vick Calligros was planning his parents' 50th wedding anniversary, he figured they had enough "stuff."

"What are they going to do with more coasters?" asked Calligros.

So he went on-line to look for charities near the home of his parents, Victor and Sylvia Calligros of Glastonbury. Donations to a good cause, he reasoned, would be more useful than gifts.

He was impressed by CRT's web site and by information he received when he called. So the invitations to the party included the request for donations to CRT in lieu of gifts.

Friends, cousins, and others responded generously to the call, with numerous non-perishable food donations accompanying numerous personal checks.

After the party, Vick Calligros joined his sister, Jodi Lussier of Glastonbury, in visiting CRT to drop off \$500 worth of checks and donations for the food bank.

"This is going to a good cause," Calligros said.

The funds will support CRT's Elderly Nutrition Program, which provides home-delivered meals to some 700 home-bound seniors, and meals at Senior Community Cafes in the Hartford and Middlesex regions.



Honoring Volunteers

Joan Corbin, standing, has been delivering Meals on Wheels for four years. She and Pat Morton, left, and Cathy Crouch, were among 150 volunteers honored at a breakfast reception this April at CRT. All three women are from East Windsor.

Crouch has been a volunteer for 20 years and appreciates the fact that Meals on Wheels allows seniors to remain in their homes. "For a lot of people, this is the last step before a nursing home," she said. "It improves the quality of their lives so much."

With the help of 250 volunteers, CRT's Hartford kitchen prepares and delivers Meals on Wheels to more than 700 homebound seniors.



"Why I Volunteer"

A quick look at the calendar
Yes, it's my day for delivery of meals;
Once a month for 3 or 4 years
I've been delivering "Meals on Wheels"

I was hesitant at first not knowing
How much time and effort it would take;
I'm so happy that I volunteered
Both for the recipients and my own sake.

As I knock on the door and call out,
"Meals on Wheels are here for you;"
I hear walkers, wheelchairs getting into motion
Or a request "Bring it on" by a few.

I've gotten to know many of the people
I feel it's the highlight of their day;
But I'm not so sure the food's as important
As the few choice words I can say.

Such as "You look very pretty today"
Or "Your apartment is so cool and nice;"
I've brought in mail, smiles to their faces
(Even took away their garbage once or twice!)

God grant me the strength and time
To continue for many more years;
And I pray more people will get involved
Delivering food, smiles, kindness and cheers...

*Anonymous Poem, read by CRT Assistant Vice President &
Nutrition Director Stefanie Belding at the Volunteer
Recognition Breakfast*

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An Exploration of Diversity

After a comprehensive employee survey and months of committee work, the Diversity Initiative at CRT is underway, and will touch every worker by the end of the year.

“This is something that’s very important to us, and we want to take it seriously at every level,” said Arlene Harris, Vice President of Organization Development and Training, who is leading the effort.

The most noticeable impact is a diversity seminar for all employees. All supervisors have now been trained, and all employees will participate by the end of this year.

“Diversity is a very complex issue. There are so many different ways to look at yourself, and others,” Harris said. “What we want to do is begin the conversation, to start people thinking about it - the things you have in common with those you work with, and the things about you that are different.”

The initiative began last year, when a steering committee examined diversity at CRT and conducted a survey of all employees. After publicizing the results, smaller groups were formed to look at different areas: Human Resources and policies, a Diversity Celebration, and communications across different departments and programs.

“Those groups will continue to meet and look at what diversity means and how it can be incorporated,” Harris said. “Diversity will be a priority and a focus at CRT on an ongoing basis from here on in.”

For more information, or to participate in one of the committees, contact Jim Pestana of the ODT department at (860) 560-5769.

CRT Times is a publication of the Community Renewal Team, Inc.

Incorporated in 1964, 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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