

Teaching Children, Reaching Families

State Treasurer Denise Nappier, right, received the 2001 Teaching Children, Reaching Families award and was the honoree at CRT's Sixth Annual benefit dinner. Approximately 300 people attended the May 17 event at the Hilton Hartford, which raised money for the Wilfred Xavier Johnson Library, a resource for early childhood educators, and CRT's Community Arts Program.

Also pictured at right are Brianna Nixon and her dad, Jeffrey Nixon. Brianna is a student at CRT's Locust Street Early Care and Education Center, and was pictured on the cover of the event's invitation and program.



Photos by
Riley D. Johnson Jr.

Look what I've got!

Celothia Johnson, age 5, shows off her new library card. Celothia and other students at CRT's Simpson-Waverly Early Care and Education Center are in close touch with the Hartford Public Library system, visiting the library and getting visits from the librarian at their school, and finally getting their own library cards. Students get to take books home, and some are also in the classroom, allowing teachers to build on themes being covered and tie them in with books.



IDAs Provide for Savings, Independence

One of CRT's newest programs is helping low-income people invest in their futures, matching each dollar they save with two more and laying the foundation to buy homes, go to college, and build businesses.

"IDAs recognize that people get out of poverty by building wealth and assets," CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo said.

The first class of participants in the IDA, or Individual Development Account program, graduated recently, completing 6 weeks of financial literacy courses. They can remain in the program for up to five years, attending monthly savings club meetings and saving up to \$6,000 for education, a small business, or buying a home

In Connecticut, State Treasurer Denise Nappier formed a Task Force on IDAs in 1999. The state's General Assembly passed legislation enacting the IDA initiative in May of 2000.

Supportive Housing Gives People Hope, Skills



Vinetta Williams, James Weatherly, and their daughter, Samantha Weatherly, are all packed and ready to go. The family was homeless when they joined CRT's supportive housing program; Weatherly and Williams bought and moved in to their own home this April.

About two years ago, Vinetta Williams was living in a homeless shelter. Her options, when she looked at them, were bleak.

"I had had a lot of trauma in my life," recalled Williams. "I was ready to give up my daughter. I had to really think about that."

That's when she became involved in CRT's Supportive Housing Program, or SHP, which gave her and her daughter a place to live and intensive support to help her get back on her feet.

Now Williams and her fiancé, James Weatherly, have bought their own home in Manchester. Weatherly, who was also homeless, participated in another CRT supportive housing program, and both are now working and looking forward to getting married this summer.

"It's amazing," Williams said recently. "When I first started, I didn't believe in the program. But they really give you a lot of support, and let you know you can do it." SHP and Project TEACH, which is for single people,

provide homeless people with personalized, very intensive support. Project TEACH provides services to 40 people, 25 of whom get an apartment, and SHP provides housing and services to 30 families.

Each person's program is based on a college-like curriculum, focusing on areas such as education, employment and income, and other life skills. Everyone's plan is different, based on background and strengths; it may include getting a GED, resume writing, or substance abuse or mental health treatment.

Senior Program Manager **Theresa Nicholson** has seen many people succeed in the programs.

"To me, one of the most interesting things about the program is that all services are tailored to the individual," she said.

"Two people have bought their own homes, now, and many go on to independent living," Nicholson added. "Even those who don't go on to live independently almost always have some degree of success, because often we pick up on an underlying mental health issue and are able to address that and line up other supports."

Daniel Daniels, a Project TEACH participant, wrote recently to state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Thomas Kirk about the program.

"My case manager (Ken Smoot) has gone out of his way, personally, helping me get my apartment together," Daniels wrote. "In the beginning I was skeptical, but now I am truly grateful...By helping to subsidize my rent, I am able to afford to work part time and go to school, thus allowing me to get a much better paying job."

Williams also recalls being skeptical at first, and having to get used to the rigorous demands of the program.

"When I started, I didn't believe in it," she said. "But now I look at it, and I'm going to have my own home. That's something I wanted since I was 13 years old. My daughter is going to have her own room and a yard to play in. If you put your mind to it, you can do anything."

For more information about CRT Supportive Housing, call Nicholson at (860) 560-5790, ext. 238.



Reaching Out to Students

CRT's Chief Administrative Officer/Executive Vice President **Lena Rodriguez** volunteered recently at Kinsella School in Hartford. As part of a project sponsored by the Jaycees, local business and community leaders visited the school to describe their jobs and work, and the training and education needed. Listening to Rodriguez, from left, are Kinsella students Christian Rodriguez, Bryan Escobar, James Scarboro, and Stanley Posso.

"Thank you for coming to Kinsella School," Bryan wrote. "Also thanks for giving us a book of CRT. I think you are a good person and the best vice president."

Teacher Joanne Palmer, who coordinated the visit, reported a similar response from other students.

"We were studying the world of work – what skills you need for each job, what the work is like," Palmer said. "It ended with the opportunity to talk to real people about their lives and their work. It went over very well."



The Retreat

An artists' rendering of The Retreat, a 97-unit assisted living facility for low-income seniors to be built by CRT near Hartford Hospital.

Please see story on Page 4.

A Man Named Joe

The following speech was given by Kaaron Calloway, Manager of CRT's Home Care Program, to Meals on Wheels volunteers at a Recognition Breakfast this April. More than 350 CRT volunteers deliver meals to homebound seniors in dozens of area towns. For more information, please call (860) 560-5826.

I'd like to share with you an experience I had recently with a man named Joe. Joe is in his eighties and is legally blind and has a heart condition, and he lives alone in the home he and his wife bought 50 years ago. Joe has a loving sister, and his wife is now confined to a nursing home with Parkinson's disease. He has one child, a son in California, and a grandchild he's never met.

Joe was an active man who enjoyed racquetball in his earlier years. He now spends his days trying to keep going, trying to find a way to visit his wife since he can no longer drive. Even though they talk on the phone 12 times a day, he still longs to see her to make sure she is doing okay.

When I met Joe a few weeks ago, he shared some of his feelings with me, saying that life had been getting too tough for him up until a few days before my visit. He

was worrying about how he was going to eat since his sight is almost completely gone. He felt that he was asking too much of his sister, who he referred to as an angel. So he had contemplated suicide until his sister gave him the number to the home delivered meals program.

He said that since he would now be getting help and would not have to worry about how he was going to get meals on his own he had begun to feel much better.

In that instance, it truly became even clearer to me the importance of the service we are capable of providing to those in need.

Without the help of you, our volunteers, I wonder how many like Joe would be suffering. So if you ever think that what you do as a volunteer is of little consequence, that no one notices or cares – think of the man named Joe.

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Assisted Living Facility Approved

CRT has received final approval for the Retreat, a 97-unit assisted living facility that will enable 100 low- and moderate-income seniors to live independently.

The facility, called The Retreat, will be built at 90 Retreat Avenue, across the street from Hartford Hospital's new ambulatory care center. It will provide simple nursing care for seniors who do not need the level of services provided in a nursing home but can't live safely or comfortably in their homes.

"This is a natural extension of our services," said CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo. "The people served are aging and are living longer. Assisted living is already available to more affluent people, but for others, this will fill a phenomenal need."

Work on the \$15 million project is to begin this fall and will be completed in 2003. The project is the first of its kind in the state to be approved by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, or CHFA. It's financed by a combination of grants, contributions, CHFA low-income housing tax credits, and operating subsidies from the state of Connecticut Department of Social Services.

Up to three meals a day, light housekeeping, and other services will be provided. People with incomes of up to \$18,100 will be eligible. The first floor will house many activity, leisure, and personal service spaces, such as lounges, a beauty parlor, and convenience shop. Within the floors, the building will be organized into small sub-units to create a sense of community in the building.

Construction is to begin this year. For information, please contact Sheldon Bustow at (860) 560-5512.

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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