

CRTtimes

Preparing Our Community to Meet Life's Challenges

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Hallmark, Area Donors, Make Season Brighter

This holiday season, every child in CRT's Early Care and Education program will go home with a brand-new lunch box that contains an educational geography game, thanks to the generosity of Hallmark.

The gifts are the latest in a series from Hallmark to CRT, in which surplus goods are distributed and used by many programs, including Head Start, Alternative Incarceration Programs, homeless shelters and supportive housing programs, and youth programs.

They also supplement an annual campaign in which CRT staff throughout Connecticut make sure clients have the gifts and means for a happy holiday.

This year, Brad and Jeffrey Hoffman are continuing their tradition of donating hundreds of turkeys to needy families. The Joy of Sharing, United Technologies, the United Way, and numerous other companies and individuals also donate to CRT's toy drive, in which toys are collected and distributed from pre-schools, neighborhood centers, and other sites.

This year, Hallmark has donated more than \$200,000 worth of goods to CRT, enriching programs with extra items and freeing program dollars for needed improvements such as playscapes.

"CRT combines the logistical capability to handle and distributing our donations, as well as doing the human services work in the community that we want to support," said Mike Connor of Hallmark. "It's a win-win situation for us."

"We're very grateful to the companies and people that help us," said Paul C. Puzzo, CRT's President/CEO. "CRT programs give people the means and the skills to be self-sufficient. Donations like this really making a difference in the lives of people who are struggling to make things better."

CRT Hosts Launch of Prescription Drug Initiative

A major new health initiative, open to all residents of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, enables people to realize substantial savings on prescription drugs whether or not they have health insurance. The initiative, called Citizen's Health, consists of a card that can be bought for \$12 for an individual or for \$28 for a family. Cardholders realize significant savings on every prescription they buy.

Announcing the initiative at CRT's Windsor Street offices this September were Citizens Energy Chairman Joseph P. Kennedy II, Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, CRT President Paul C. Puzzo and other CRT officials, and numerous other state and Community Action Agency representatives.

Kennedy described the hardship of many working poor people who can't afford to pay for needed prescription drugs, leading them to have to not fill prescriptions or to take a fraction of the needed dose.

Working with pharmacies and some pharmaceutical companies, Citizen's Health has created a network that Kennedy hopes will serve as a pilot for states around the country.

"We're aiming to improve health care for those who can't pay," Kennedy said.

The cards are available to anyone; there are no income or other requirements. CRT and other Connecticut Community Action Agencies are working with their clients and other groups to help get the word out. For information, or to ask for an application, please call 1 (800) 563-5479, or 1-800-JOE-4-RX.



CRT's 2nd Annual Corporate Breakfast

Hartford Hospital President John Meehan addresses more than 100 corporate and community leaders at CRT's Second Annual Corporate Breakfast. Meehan spoke about Hartford Hospital's commitment to the Hartford community and similarities between the hospital and CRT's anti-poverty mission. For more information, please contact Director of Development **Nancy Shapiro** at (860) 560-5471.

Learning to Love Reading

Debbie Cawley, the new literacy coordinator for CRT's Early Care and Education program, once showed a group of parents how to read a story to their children.

She started out asking questions. "What color is his sweater? Why is he sitting on the table? Does this person look happy or sad?"

In the end, Cawley recalled, it took a half-hour to get through the brief picture book.

"But the point was to show that there is no one 'right' way to do it," Cawley explained. "You have to get the children interested and answer their questions. It's more important to get the kids involved and enjoying the process than to read every word from beginning to end."

Cawley's position is a new one, and reflects CRT's commitment to teaching pre-school children appropriate literacy skills. CRT's ECE program includes Head Start and other pre-school programs, and cares for more than 1,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Hartford and Middlesex Counties. So far, she is working to catalogue and revitalize the Wilfred Johnson Memorial



Early Care and Education
Literacy Coordinator,
Debbie Cawley

Library, a resource for teachers at CRT and other pre-school centers, and to include a section for parents. She will also conduct workshops for parents, including information on what their children are learning and how they can reinforce it at home.

Literacy in pre-school, Cawley explained, is made up of a host of concepts and skills that lead up to reading.

"Parents can be teaching literacy by playing rhyming and word games with their kids while they're taking a bath, or on the bus," Cawley said. "They can be showing the relationship between words and concepts, by showing kids how they follow a recipe, or pointing out street signs."

"Literacy is just so important, because it's a predictor of how well kids will do in so many other areas as they get older," Cawley added. "Reading is a life skill. Everything requires reading."

CRT's ECE program, which includes Head Start, is a comprehensive pre-school experience that includes parent involvement, health and nutrition, free vision and dental screenings for all children, and an academic curriculum that prepares children for success in kindergarten and in school. For information, or for a tour of a CRT ECE center, please call (860) 560-5565.

CRT Energy Staff is Ready for Winter

The sun is setting earlier in the day, temperatures are dropping - all signs CRT's Energy Department is at work, accepting application for the Energy Assistance Program.

The Energy Assistance program, funded through the state's Department of Social Services, provides help for low-income people and families to help pay winter heating bills.

People will be able to apply for energy assistance at 51 sites throughout Hartford and Middlesex Counties, said manager of Energy Services **Pat Walker**. Many are located in senior and community centers, town halls, and other existing locations.

In recent years, rising oil costs have resulted in more people applying and in higher income guidelines to help working families make ends meet in light of the sudden high expense.

Last year CRT accepted 22,000 applications, up from about 17,000 the previous year.

The program provides a cash award, usually paid to the fuel provider, to people and families that meet income guidelines. Last year, a family of four could earn about \$40,000 and be eligible for assistance.

For information about how to apply and the site nearest you, call (860) 560-5800, or, in Middlesex County, toll free at 1-800-798-3805.

UNITED WE STAND

By Monique Williams

LET THIS NOT BE OUR FIRST AND LAST TIME WE PRAY, LET'S PRAY EVERYDAY OF OUR LIVES FOR PEACE & HARMONY, THAT EVERYDAY BE A NEW DAY A NEW CHAPTER, LET US NOT BE JUDGMENTAL OF OTHERS, LET US LISTEN MORE TO OUR FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS AND LOVED ONES, LET'S COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER MORE, LET'S CRY AND WEEP AS WE NEED, LET US BE TRUE IN OUR HEARTS, LET'S RESPECT ONE ANOTHER MORE, LET'S LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER, OUR BACKGROUNDS, OUR CULTURES, LET US NOT GIVE UP HOPE FOR WITH HOPE YOU CAN CLIMB MANY MOUNTAINS, LET US SHOW MORE COMPASSION, LET US UNITE, NOT BY OUR COLOR OF OUR SKIN, NOR BY OUR RACE, BUT BY LOVE, TELL SOMEBODY YOU LOVE THEM EVERYDAY, SHOW SOMEONE YOU CARE, LET SOMEONE KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE, AND BEFORE ALL, TELL YOURSELF AND SHOW YOURSELF THAT YOU LOVE YOU, THIS IS A GOAL WE CAN ACHIEVE, BUT WE MUST BE WILLING, WE MUST SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER, AND TOGETHER WE WILL UNITE

Monique Williams is a family service worker at CRT's Grace Street Early Care & Education Center



No one is born prejudiced.

CRT joins the world in sympathy for those touched by recent terrorist attacks.

We will continue our anti-poverty work so that people can learn to fight hate and work together for a better world.

Agency Reorganization Focuses on Quality, Growth

CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo, working closely with the agency's Board of Trustees, has announced a new organizational structure, effective October 1.

"This will allow us to maintain the quality of our core programs, while enabling us to be able to respond quickly to change and to grow," Puzzo said. "This accomplishes the goals we set when we began our long-term strategic planning process in 1999."

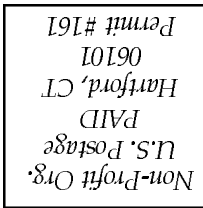
"We've got some excellent people in place, and the agency is moving forward in a very positive way," Puzzo added. "These changes will allow us to better identify what's happening in our community and run programs that will really make a difference."

Lena Rodriguez has been named Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer, overseeing administrative services and most programs in Middletown and Hartford Counties.

Paul Copes becomes Executive Director of Education Services, including Early Care and Education in Hartford and Middletown, the Charter Oak Preparatory Academy, Day Care Homes, and the Satellite Child Care program.

David Pudlin remains Vice President of External Affairs, with oversight over the Public Relations and Communications and the Corporate and Community Relations Departments.

Arlene Harris remains Vice President of Organization Development and Training, supervising Organization Development, staff training, the upcoming Community Needs Assessments, strategic planning, and ROMA, or Results Oriented Management Accountability.



Community Renewal Team Inc.
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CRT Launches 16th Annual National Arts Program

Thousands of dollars in cash will be awarded to artists statewide this February as part of the Community Renewal Team's 16th annual National Arts Program in Hartford.

Professional and amateur artists submit their work for the juried competition; all art entered is displayed in locations throughout the community.

"It's been wonderful to see so many young people discover a talent and passion for the arts, over the years," said CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo. "Those that win awards are happy, of course, and everyone gets to see their work on display for the community".

This annual juried competition is sponsored in part by the National Arts Foundation. More than \$7,500 in prizes and scholarships will be awarded to artists of all ages.

Artwork may be submitted to the Community Renewal Team at 555 Windsor St., Hartford, CT, between January 9 and January 13, 2001 from 1 to 4 p.m. All art must meet program guidelines. No extensions will be granted. The public exhibition will take place January 29 to February 17, 2001.

Guidelines apply: Entries may be drawings, crafts, graphic arts, painting, or photography. All entries must be the original work of the applicant; must fit into the categories listed; all drawings should be protected with fixation or cellophane to prevent smudging or damage to artwork; all artwork, including photography, must be hard back mounted and matted with the completed entry form on the back surface; all two-dimensional entries must be prepared and ready for hanging. Only one entry per participant is allowed. Do not submit work that is obviously delicate, fragile, or small. Work needs to withstand handling necessary for some transport and hanging. No paint-by-numbers or work prepared from a kit may be submitted. Works may not exceed 30 inches.

For more information about guidelines or for an entry form, please call (860) 560-5311 or (860) 560-5471.

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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