



Infocus

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Youth Artisans Celebrate Successful First Year

Making something out of nothing. Value your work. Creativity is worth something.

These are among the lessons learned this summer by more than 50 teenagers at CRT's first Youth Artisans Program. For three weeks, the teens spent the day with area artists E. Diann Cook and Joe Young, CRT's Community Arts Coordinators. Topics included refinishing and making art from old furniture, drawing, murals, music, and drama.

At the end, the students auctioned off their work, earning hundreds of dollars for the program – and teaching students the value of their creations.

“The teachers really care about you and your work, and what you’re going to grow up into,” said Fox Middle School student Caprice McGhee. “It’s very interesting. We have a lot of freedom to do things and express ourselves.”



“I love the program,” said student Andrew Flynn, from Simsbury. “It’s fun and lets you express yourself, and you don’t have to do things a certain way like in a classroom.”

The program was funded by the state’s Department of Social Services and took place at 1445 Main Street, where students had plenty of room to spread out. For information, call (860) 560-5311.

Retreat Breaks Ground: Re-Dedication to Hartford, Community

State and local leaders gathered this August to celebrate the beginning of construction of The Retreat, a 100-unit assisted living facility for low-income seniors sponsored by CRT.

Assisted Living is an increasingly popular and important housing option for seniors. It offers a range of services to assist residents with activities of daily living, such as bathing, shopping and cooking, and remembering to take medications. But it is much less expensive than a nursing home, and gives residents independence and a comfortable and flexible lifestyle.

The Retreat broke ground in July 2003 and will open in the fall of 2004.

“Assisted living, for a long time has been a province of the wealthy,” said Marc Ryan, Secretary of the Office of the Secretary, representing Governor John G. Rowland at The Retreat’s dedication ceremony in August. “You will be providing dignified care to low- and middle-income folks who could never before afford it.

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Congressman Larson Visits CRT

Congressman John Larson, a Democrat from Connecticut, visited CRT's Head Start program recently to learn more about how the program operates.

Larson's visit was prompted by a proposal by President Bush to change the way Head Start is funded. The proposal would allow some states to get Head Start funds directly and operate the program; now, individual grantees such as CRT get funds directly from the federal government to run Head Start.

Larson and others oppose the change, saying Head Start risks losing the comprehensive services that make the program effective. More than 20 parents and staff members met with Larson, who also visited a classroom at the T.D. Ritter ECE Center.

"Head Start may be the title, but the program is so much more," parent Norm Jones told Larson. "A lot of these parents are single and young and they just don't know. Bringing them here brings them under the umbrella of CRT. They get access to a lot of services than can help them, that they'd never know about if not for Head Start."

Larson thanked all participants for their time and input. "This is giving people help, as opposed to just telling them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. You can't do that if you don't have any bootstraps to start with," he said.

Kathy Lusby, a Program Manager for CRT's Head Start, said she's worked at other non-profits centers, and also at for-profits, and never been as satisfied with her work as at CRT.

"I never felt I really knew the needs of the whole family until I came here," she said. "Children can't learn if their teeth hurt, or if there's so much lead in their system; they don't feel right. Head Start's comprehensive services address all these areas and help the children, and their families, be self-sufficient and functioning members of society."



Connecticut Senior Service Corp Association Annual Meeting

Photo and story courtesy CRT RSVP Program

This summer's annual meeting of the Connecticut Senior Service Corporation addressed annual progress of the Senior Service Corp Association in Connecticut.

The highlight of the meeting was the guest speaker and author David Games, who spoke about how volunteering had affected his life.

As the result of his volunteer work, Games was inspired to share one of his experiences in a story that he submitted to the publishers of the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series. His story entitled "A Friend for All Seasons" was recently published in their latest addition: "Chicken Soup for the Volunteer Soul".

Games spoke movingly about his relationship with a homebound senior, Alice who owned a dog. The dog, Thor, a rather large, intimidating German Shepard, was walked twice a week each time that David came to visit Alice. These regular visits continued even after Thor passed away and Alice move to another town, transcending the bond that had initially bought them together.

Employee

of The Month



Magda Ramos,

ECE Nutrition Department

July



Mark Pallatino,

Enfield AIC

August

Continued from page 1

"I want to thank CRT," Ryan added. "CRT is one of the largest Community Action Agencies in the nation, and you really go from cradle to grave, providing Head Start and Meals on Wheels. With The Retreat, you show your dedication to the elderly."

The Retreat is one of five pilot programs to provide Assisted Living to low- and moderate-income elderly, and speakers at the ceremony cited its importance both as the largest and as one in an urban center.

"As our citizens live longer and have more productive lives, they need care their families can't always provide," said Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez. "We need this type of bridge, and The Retreat is going to provide it."

Speakers praised CRT's handling of the complex and years-long development process.

"I've been in banking 10 years, and I have to say this is the most well-organized and well put-together project I've ever seen," said Ruth Price, Vice President of Sovereign Bank.

CRT worked with many funders and partners on the project, including the state's Departments of Public Health, Social Services, Economic and Community Development, and several banks. For information, call (860) 560-2273.



- ▶ **Mark your calendars!** For the first time since its inception in 1997, the Pa 'feura Pa 'lante Latino/as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Northeast Regional Conference will be hosted in the state of Connecticut. Pa 'fuera Pa lante, which translates into "Coming out and Moving forward," will be celebrated at the Sheraton Hartford Hotel, 100 East River Drive in East Hartford, September 26, 27, and 28. Don't miss the weekend of powerful, cutting-edge workshops and fun-filled social events. For more information, e-mail pafuerapalante2003@yahoo.com, or call Willie Castillo at Hispanos Unidos Inc. at (203) 781-0226, ext 103, or Jose Vega (860) 722-6920.
- ▶ The Human Resources Department has announced that all employees may now nominate co-workers or other staff for the Employee of the Month award. If you want to nominate someone, get the nomination form from Human Resources, complete it, and submit to your nominee's Department Head. Also, employees must have worked at CRT at least 90 days, and cannot be a manager. For forms or information, contact Nicole Davis at (860) 560-5655.
- ▶ The MIS Department announces two additions: Russell Cormier joins CRT as Director of MIS, and Matt Hawley as Help Desk Coordinator. Cormier has developed sales presentations for computer software fairs throughout the US, and has a bachelor's degree in computer science as well as Microsoft Product Specialist certification. Hawley will head CRT's Help Desk; computer troubleshooting and telephone issues may now be directed to him, at (860) 560-5717.
- ▶ **Correction:** The Food Connection article on page 4 of the July/August 2003 InFocus was incorrectly credited to Susan Svoboda. It was written by Kim Acari of the Food Connection program.
- ▶ The Connecticut Association for Community Action has been awarded a \$300,000 grant by the Connecticut Department of Labor to provide Individual Development Accounts, or IDAs, for three years. IDAs provide matched savings and education for participants to buy a home or car, go to school, or operate a business.
- ▶ Quamaine Wilson, grandson of Freida Wilson of CRT's Finance Department, received the 2003 President's Award for Educational Excellence, signed by President George W. Bush and presented by the faculty of Sage Park Middle School in Windsor. Congratulations Quamaine!

Head to the Library



CRT's annual Head to the Library brings graduating Head Start students to the Hartford Public Library's Main Street headquarters for an afternoon of fun. Children get a backpack and school supplies, and lots of enthusiasm for the library and their entrance into kindergarten.

METRO HARTFORD

Chances At Golf And Life

'Mulligans' Program Pairs Teenagers With Mentors

BY MELISSA PIONDO
COURANT STAFF WRITER

A simple visit to the doctor earlier this summer led 15-year-old Job Ezuliner to participate in a golf-mentoring program that has introduced him not only to the sport, but also to a slew of new friends.

"I love hitting the ball," said Job, a Hartford resident who decided to attend the program after his family doctor showed him a brochure.

HARTFORD

"I've been to camps alone before and it's kind of scary at first, but then you meet people and get used to it."

The 12-week program, called "Mulligans," is offered through the Community Renewal Team and pairs 13- to 17-year-olds from Hartford and East Hartford with adult mentors. It also introduces them to the Keney Park or Goodwin Park public golf courses, where they can practice driving, chipping and putting and learn more about golf rules and etiquette. This is the first summer the program has been offered to the public, said program coordinator Larry Dworetzky.

"Mulligans" means "second chance" (in golf) and a lot of these kids have been referred by the Junior Justice System (at CRT), so for some, it is a second chance," said Dworetzky, who lives in New London. "They are all really good kids."

Mulligans is funded by a grant from the United States Golf Association, along with support from the Tiger Woods Foundation, Target stores and other corporate and private donors. Teenagers who attend all 12 weeks of the program are awarded a certificate of completion and a complimentary golf bag and clubs.

"I hope they get a better understanding of what goes on, not just in the game of golf," said Dworetzky. "Golf is one of those games that simulates life. You always have options. We try to impress that they make the choices themselves."

During a recent life skills discussion that is part of the Mulligans program, Dworetzky and fellow program leader Neil Lalonde of Bristol discussed responsibilities in the home with a group of about 20 teenagers.

"What do you think of when you think of your home?" Dworetzky asked.

Safety, family, work and food were some of the most common answers, while others gave no reply or just shook their heads saying, "You don't want to know."

But 13-year-old Amber Jackson didn't mind sharing thoughts regarding her East Hartford home, which, she said, reminds her of family and the responsibilities of cleaning house and baby-sitting her cousin. Mulligans has been a good experience so far, she said, even though it wasn't her idea.

"My mom made me participate," she said. "I objected because I just wanted a free summer, but today I hit a few good shots on the course and driving range, so it's getting better."

Amber's mentor, Edith Genzira of Bloom-



BENJAMIN J. SPRITZ / THE HARTFORD COURANT

EMMANUEL SIMPWI, 13, of Hartford, can't believe he missed his putt on the fifth hole of the Goodwin Park Golf Course Friday morning. Simpwi is one of a number of Greater Hartford youths learning to play golf as part of a Community Renewal Team program called "Mulligans."

field, is another reason why she likes the sessions.

"Eddie's great. She's really nice. She's generous and she likes to keep the conversation going

so it keeps me interested," said Amber. "She's a good people person."

For information on Mulligans, call Christopher McCloskey at CRT, 860-347-4463, Ext. 225.

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June Birthdays

Patterson, Alice	2	Grippio, Liberata	23
Aheart, Lamont	3	Torres, Miriam G	23
Cheema, Maria B	3	Hayes, Eddie James	24
Shazel, Crystal	3	Santiago, Magda I	24
Tantas, Maria	3	Santos, Candida	24
Telles, Amalia	3	Williams, Claire	25
Edwards, Angela	4	Bhola, Ravena Shiromani	26
Byrd, David	5	Cruz, Dilia	26
Ferguson, Pamela S	5	Nimro, Judith	26
Rivera, Maria I	5	Izzo, Robert Andrew	27
Tyson, Luther	5	Maziarz, Beverly	28
Swain, Etta	6	Rowe, Kiarema	28
Jenkins, Daryl R	7	Castillo, Miriam	29
Rose, Gloria	7	Murphy, Dwight	29
Ibscher, Margrite J	10	Nelson, Susan G	29
Lawrence, Itzaida	10	Puzzo, Paul C	29
Robinson, Patricia	10	Wise, Arteasia J	29
Owens, Willie Clyde	11	Caron, Daniel R	30
Fabiani, Maria	12	Thompson, Patricia A	30
Gourzang-Allen, Marie	12		
Francini, Todd	13		
Meza, Norka V	14		
Diaz, Jessenia	16		
Guzman, Yulimar	16		
Santiago, Zahira	18		
Wright, Paula	19		
Chretien, Carol	21		
Rivera, Maria A	21		
Sapia, Mary	22		
Waldo, Marla-Jo	22		

The Community Renewal Team, Inc. provides a range of anti-poverty programs that help people and families become self-sufficient and to ensure their basic human needs are met. Programs include Head Start and Early Care and Education; Meals on Wheels and meals at senior centers; criminal justice programs; neighborhood-based outreach; positive youth development; energy and weatherization assistance; employment and training; and emergency shelter and supportive housing. CRT was formed in 1963 and is now Connecticut's largest Community Action Agency.

InFocus is the monthly newsletter for CRT employees, trustees, and volunteers.

Please submit information or story ideas to InFocus at 555 Windsor St., Hartford, CT, 06120-2418

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