

CRT Goes to Washington

When Senator Chris Dodd asked the Community Action Agencies to find an articulate Energy Assistance customer to testify in Washington, CRT responded enthusiastically. We knew that the first tenant at the Grandfamily Housing Development, Robin Hussain, would be perfect for this assignment. She had already spoken at the Grandfamily ribbon cutting, bringing tears to the eyes of everyone present.



It took some juggling on Robin's part, as she enlisted her mother to watch two of the three grandchildren she's raising.



And it took quick work by CRT staff to make the last minute travel arrangements, and help write the testimony. But six days after she was chosen by Sen. Dodd's staff as the one "real customer" to speak at the hearings, Robin took her seat at the witness table.

The testimony on March 5 was before the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. Robin spoke about how important energy assistance can be to a struggling family. And she also spoke about the wonderful case management staff of CRT, whom she first met while enrolling her grandchildren in Head Start.

One member of the subcommittee, Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, stressed that Robin was "fortunate to have linked up with a good case manager and agency. Many people never find out about the energy program until it's too late."

Robin had nothing but praise for CRT. Once she enrolled the grandchildren in Head Start, she was able to go back to work – initially working as a substitute at various CRT ECE programs. She got involved in the Parents Committee, first at the school and then as secretary of the Policy Council. "It was my first time in a 'community leadership' type of position, and it felt like a safe place to start," Robin says. From there, she connected with organizations that provide services and advocacy for grandparents raising their grandchildren.

STEPS TO SUCCESS An Agency-wide Initiative

By Lena Rodriguez, CRT President/CEO

I was pleased to see so many of you at the kick-off training events for CRT Steps to Success. Two days of Case Management Training brought in more than 150 of you, and there were 90 at the subsequent Steps to Success kick off and "pep rally." This is an exciting time, as CRT realigns the way that we do business – with our customers, with our fellow employees, and with the broader community. It is our greatest Agency-wide priority!



As most of you know, Steps to Success is CRT's holistic approach to helping families move from poverty to prosperity. You were already familiar with the Human Services



Infrastructure, or H.S.I., the universal intake we use with our customers. Steps to Success moves us to the next level: We have a full assessment, more intensive case management, and quarterly tracking of successes.

Steps to Success uses intensive case management to assist families and individuals reach their goals and move toward self sufficiency and wellness through an individualized plan.

- Steps to Success builds on customer strengths: Case managers emphasize participants' internal resources and natural/community networks of support.
- Steps to Success is customer-centered: Resource Teams bring together assets and support across program lines, wherever a customer enters CRT.
- Steps to Success builds on incremental accomplishments: Staff regularly review goals, celebrate success, and provide strategies to address obstacles.
- Steps to Success provides measurable data: The Self-Sufficiency Scale, administered quarterly, tracks family progress from crisis to thriving in 17 areas.

Using Steps to Success, you will help your clients achieve their goals, and you will be able to document the progress that they have made. The entire Agency is taking these steps together – toward shared success. At the end of the year, the reports will let you know how many people you have helped to move out of poverty, and how many are meeting their goals. This is a rewarding aspect of the work that we do.

Family Fun Day at Locust Street

On April 4, the Locust Street Early Childhood Education program held a successful Family Fun Day. This is CRT's largest ECE Center, with 368 children. All parents and caregivers were invited to take part in center wide activities and individual classroom events. The day long celebration included such activities as the Radio Disney's Healthy Foods Show, an interactive Literacy Movement and Music presentation, a magical clown show, a science demonstration by the new Connecticut Science Center and an ice cream party!

Information was provided by 211, CRT, the-African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc. (AFCAMP), Community Health Services, and the Fire Department. Every family was given the opportunity to enroll their child in the Amber Alert system and to obtain free identification cards. Over 300 goodie bags were distributed and a gift drawing resulted in five winners. Radio Disney gave out prizes and bags of fruits and vegetables. Guests were treated to a homemade pasta and salad luncheon, complete with dessert.

Classroom activities included multicultural parties, art shows, performances by enrolled children, parents reading to the children, pajama parties and more! A wonderful time was had by all!!!



Parents and kids at the Family Fun Day at Locust Street



HSI Tips

Early Care & Education. 555 Windsor St., Hartford, (860) 560-5401 or 560-5444

Who the Program Serves: Children ages 6 weeks to 5 years participate in the program. Children with special needs welcome.

Income Guidelines: Eligibility is based on the family's income and the child's age. Fees are based on a sliding scale and many families pay nothing.

Program Synopsis: CRT's Early Care and Education Division provides:

- Head Start
- School Readiness
- Infant and Toddler Day Care

CRT's Early Care and Education Centers address each child's education, mental and physical health, nutrition and disabilities, along with a family's social service needs. ECE Family Service staff help families determine their needs and goals, provides referrals, training and crisis intervention.

Through indoor and outdoor activities, children will:

- Learn about words, numbers, shapes and colors
- Express their feelings
- Develop self-confidence
- Take pride in their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Application Process:

Open enrollment is held throughout the year. Parents interested in enrolling their children or visiting a nearby center should call (860) 560 5401 or 560-5444

CRT Goes to Washington *Continued from page 1*

All of that was good preparation for Robin's Washington debut. Her voice scarcely quivered as she addressed Senators, their aides, and a larger public listening on a nationwide internet broadcast.

"The LIHEAP program treats people with dignity. It helps ease the burden of staying warm in the winter, whether you're in an apartment heated with gas or a home heated with oil. We can all see that fuel and heat have gone sky high in the last couple of years. Programs like this help prevent people from freezing, or losing their apartment altogether," Robin told the Senators.

Robin says that she and her granddaughter were treated like royalty in Washington. Senate staffers gave them a private tour of the Capitol. CRT executives Fred Lynn, Don Neel and Lena Rodriguez took them out for meals. And the hotel helped to arrange a whirlwind tour of some of the most important – and closest – monuments and museums. "You would definitely have to say that I had the time of my life," said Robin.

Parents Empowering Parents

Recently, The Community Renewal Team's Early Care Education Department received a grant to begin an exciting parent training program called Parents Empowering Parents.



In this dynamic, results-driven ten-session course, several Family Service Coordinators are teaching life skills and parent leadership techniques to a group of dedicated parents. The sessions are taught from a hierarchical model, whereby a strong focus is placed on the foundation of values, followed by communication skills, active listening, understanding the helping role, understanding ourselves as parents, and understanding our children. The sessions continue with a focus on empowering parents to create action plans to reach out to their community and to assess their efforts in their involvement and outreach.

Parents currently involved include a poet in the making, a resilient woman who raised her brothers at the age of 14, and a mother with aspirations to enter the health field. Their experience in the training will give them the confidence and decision-making skills to engage in the one important mission of all the people we serve: to give them the tools and confidence to overcome life's problems and reach a place of self-sufficiency.

INFOCUS WITH:

Brittney Melvin, daughter of Yolanda Ortiz, Case Manager at CRT's Supportive Housing will be performing in the Spring musical *DESSA ROSE* at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. Below is information on the musical including description, dates of performances and box office information.

DESSA ROSE "Two women from different worlds form a deep bond in the Deep South".

Theatre for the Performing Arts, 15 Vernon Street, Hartford

May 8 and 13, 2008 @1:30pm. | BOX OFFICE 860-757-6388
May 9,10,15,16 and 17, 2008 @7:30 | Tickets \$10-\$25

Grocery Delivery Program for Seniors

The new CRT Grocery Delivery Program for Seniors supports the independence and well-being of homebound elders and those who have difficulty with food shopping. The program covers the delivery cost associated with two grocery orders per month. Each order must total at least \$40. Orders will be brought into the home by the driver. Customers receive a weekly circular and must place the order by telephone. The market confirms the total cost and payment must be made in full at the time of delivery using cash (exact change only), credit card or check. Coupons may be used, but will be deducted from the next order. Customers are also asked to donate \$1.00 per delivery, but nobody is turned away because of an inability to pay. If you know of a senior who may be in need of this service, please contact 560-5828 for further details and for enrollment into the program.

HSI Tips

GROCERY DELIVERY PROGRAM FOR SENIORS. (860) 560-5828

- Who the Program Serves:** Homebound elders, and those who have difficulty with food shopping due to the lack of transportation, stamina to walk around the supermarket, or strength to carry the groceries into their homes
- Eligibility:** The program serves those who are at least 60 years old and their spouses.
- Program Synopsis:** Elders living in Greater Hartford can have groceries delivered to their homes twice each month, without paying a delivery fee. Deliveries are available in the towns of Bloomfield, Farmington, Hartford, New Britain, Wethersfield and Windsor. Most deliveries are made on weekdays.
- Contact:** Nutrition Department
Phone: 860-560-5828

A Celebrity Among Us!

What do Jose Vega and Gene Wilder have in common? On April 9, they were both honored at the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Culture and Tourism, a lavish



event in the atrium of the Legislative Office Building. Jose, our Assistant Director of Housing, was named a Distinguished Advocate for the Arts; he and Joyce Bolanos are co-hosts of a public access television show called "Viva Hartford" which showcases the capital city's ethnic and cultural diversity. Gene Wilder, who lives in Stamford, was honored for 58 years of artistic excellence, including starring roles in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, *Silver Streak*, *The Producers* and *Young Frankenstein* (which he also wrote). With McKinney Shelter staff on hand to support him, Jose was interviewed for both a radio and a television show; the entire ceremony was taped by CTN for broadcast at a future date. The co-hosts of the ceremony said that Jose is a "vibrant local advocate whose personality makes a big impact, both on and off the screen." We couldn't agree more!



Job Fair Yields 545 Applicants

On April 2, CRT hosted its first annual Recruitment Open House and Job Fair. The day consisted of an early afternoon and an early evening session where job seekers came to learn about our programs and services from staff and management who manned tables representing each program within the agency. Qualified job seekers were even granted on-the-spot interviews! The event was a huge success which yielded 545 job seekers; 416 resulting from employee referrals and word of mouth. The success of this year's fair was due primarily to all the staff, family and friends of CRT who hit the streets with a plethora of flyers, posters and postcards designed by Maria Cheema to advertise this event. Special thanks go out to Maria Cheema and Nancy Shapiro for their coordination of marketing tools and to Jose Vega who volunteered his time and video recording equipment to produce a public service announcement, (PSA), which was aired on Public Access television and yielded 17 fair attendees. Additional thanks go out to CRT's Nutrition and Facilities departments as well as to Marcolina Garcia and Sean Brown who starred in the bi-lingual PSA. Finally, we thank the entire management team for making themselves available to represent their respective departments and the entire Human Resources Department who planned, organized and facilitated the day's events. To date, the Job Fair resulted in the Agency hiring 18 individuals who have already started working in several different programs including Supportive Housing and IT. We also have received 214 qualified applications for employment which HR is still reviewing and interviewing for other vacant positions. Thank you to everyone who supported this effort, we couldn't have done it without you!

CRT's 9th Annual Resource Fair

On March 27, the CRT Early Care and Education Family Service Staff hosted the 9th Annual Community Resource Fair at the Lumsden Center with participation from 45 agencies from throughout the area.

This annual event provides an opportunity for ECE families and other customers to learn about the services available to them through CRT and the community. Well attended by staff and families, the fair provides wonderful networking opportunities and one more step on the way to success for our families.

Summer Food Wins Award

CRT's Middletown Summer Food Program was given an award from the State Department of Education for achieving the greatest increase of any program in the state. In 2007, CRT served 8,857 free lunches and breakfasts to low income children in Middletown and Portland, up from 3,755 in 2006. Congratulations and thanks to food production and delivery staff, site supervisors, and the folks at Hamlin Street.

Seniors Building Wins Award

CRT's Grandfamily Housing Development is attracting attention again! The Hartford Preservation Alliance has selected CRT's renovation of the historic St. Michael's School as the recipient of its 2008 Preservation Award. The 19th century building now has 16 spacious one-bedroom apartments for seniors on the upper floors. The first floor houses offices for our social service and activity staff; a police substation; laundry facilities; a small kitchen; and two distinct recreation spaces with computers, games, television and more. The rec area is primarily for the children who live in the nearby townhouses, and are being raised by their grandchildren.

Billboards Offer Pointed Messages



Have you seen CRT's new tobacco billboards around Hartford? This is the third series from the Tobacco-Free Lifestyles Program. The winning designs from teens in our Community Life Skills program were transformed into high-impact billboards by Design Specialist Maria Cheema. Our messages have already gotten about three million "exposures," based on the number of times that people pass the boards. More than 150 other professionals heard about this campaign at a conference in April called Building Tobacco Free Communities, where Health Educator Cyomara Fisher was part of a panel entitled Connecticut's Successes: A Look at New Ideas.

African-American Affairs Commission Recognizes CRT

CRT is being honored by the State of Connecticut African-American Affairs Commission at its ninth annual Classic Awards, as a leader in Community Business and Economic Development. The award recognizes the fact that CRT has made significant contributions to the African-American community in the area of economic development; has African-Americans in the upper levels of management and on its Board of Directors; and has provided services in the African-American community. The award is being presented on May 2 at the Legislative Office Building.

Funding Brings Smiles for Investors

There will be more happy homeowners and entrepreneurs, thanks to a new grant that CRT has received from the CT Department of Labor. This spring we will be providing 25 more customers with matched savings accounts, known as Individual Development Accounts or 'IDAs'. Each time that a low-income customer invests \$1 in these accounts, they receive a \$2 match, until they reach a total of \$4,500. This money can be used to buy a home, start a business, go to school or purchase a car that's required for employment. The DOL grant totals \$88,235. Congratulations to Steve Gosselin and Andrea Hardy, who've been working with our IDA customers for more than seven years.

Training and Development

English as a Second Language

Faculty of Goodwin College concluded facilitation of basic ESL classes on Saturday, April 26th. Beginning this summer, employees will be able to use Rosetta Stone interactive language-learning software to strengthen their grammar, reading, writing and speaking skills! This self-paced form of learning is available in ESL Levels 1, 2 and 3. Watch your InFocus Magazine and payroll stuffers for more information as to when the software will be made available.

Leadership Development Training Series

The "every-third Wednesday" leadership series continued on March 26th with Understanding the Customer Experience, and on April 30th with Meeting Facilitation. Subsequent workshops will cover teambuilding, ways to energize and appreciate employees, managing multiple priorities and a variety of other topics! These workshops are open to supervisors and managers.

Haz Mat

In February, a Hazardous Chemicals and Workplace Safety workshop was facilitated by Lisa Schwartz from The Hartford Insurance Group for Facilities staff.

CPR/First Aid Certification

In March, Jessica Bottomley, Jose Cruz, Marisha Davis, Trevor Meade and Marilyn Williams completed CPR/First Aid Certification Training, enabling CRT to certify our employees in-house in Adult CPR and Standard First Aid. In April the team began certifying and re-certifying employees from Housing and Behavioral Health Services, ensuring those Programs' compliance. In May this training will be made available to employees across the Agency.

For more information, to register for Training and Development activities or borrow materials from the HR/Training Library, contact Valerie Taylor at 560-5801.

Employee Recognition Program Wall of Excellence

January 2008



John Parks extends himself beyond his role as a security guard for The Retreat. In the absence of a front desk receptionist, he took it upon himself to learn the responsibilities of the position which included handling incoming phone calls and learning how to type in order to provide administrative support. Responding to an emergency situation involving one of The Retreat's members, John acted with precision and care engaging emergency personnel and the media in a professional manner. John maintains a positive attitude, takes initiative and will ask "what do you need me to do?" He is respected by his fellow employees, Retreat members and anyone he comes in contact with.

February 2008



Shalai "Shay" Scott started out as a seasonal energy employee. Through dedication and hard work, she quickly proved herself and moved into a role as HSI case manager. Shay works autonomously as CRT's only full time staff in our Manchester office, taking the initiative to attend Manchester Community Service Council meetings to network with other agencies and keep abreast of available resources for her customers. Customers and Manchester Social Services staff describe her as friendly, polite, knowledgeable, flexible, and eager to partner with others. This year, as the coordinator and sole VITA tax preparer for the Manchester site, Shay single-handedly prepared 230 tax returns, covering evening and weekend shifts, and extending herself as needed to help out in our Hartford offices.

▼ New Employees

Facilities

Harlow, Carey
Jackson, Damian

Energy

Acosta, Arlene
Howard, Robbin
Perez, Carmen
Prude, Brice

Executive

Dickson, Marilyn
Nicholson, Tere

Information Technology

Kells-Murpphy, Patricia
Ramirez, Sonia

Neighborhood Services

Higginbotham, Brittany

Supportive Housing

Bennett, Tony
Gonzalez, Ivette
Wilson, Yvonne
Zamisz, Christopher

Milford A.I.C.

Davis, Jerome
Dilling, Kellie
Lanier, Takiya
Wilson, Charles

Planning

Debenian, Ashley

Asian Family Services

McWeeny, Melissa

Nutrition

Johnson, Janis
Martin, Rose
O'Keefe, Cathy

Fresh Start

Cartagena, Angelica

Youth Services

Tirado, Juana

McKinney Shelter

Johnson, Corey
Pouncey, Timothy
Simon, Raymond

ECE

Hodge, Juliette
Zea, Liliana
Aguilera, Maria
Claudio, Iris
Fernandez, Jacqueline
Franceschini, Wilma
Leone, Donna
Santiago, Jessica
Lanphier, Susan
Roberts, Tracy
Brezler, Katherine
Ufret, Lourdes
Rodriguez, Adabel

Grandfamilies

Blackman, George

Retreat

Bard, Bertrand
McBride, Shellene
Bustamante, Miguel
Rosado, Rachel
Siano, James

Behavioral Health

Fallon, Patrick



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Community Renewal Team, Inc.
 555 Windsor Street
 Hartford, CT 06120-2418

May Birthdays

Gaston, Carolyn	2	Malone, Michael	9	Gutierrez, Giovanna	18	Genua, Genevieve	26
Cooper, Gilbert	3	Rodriguez, Magdalena	9	Richard, Sherina	18	Jones, Adrienne	26
Michalman, Robert	3	Wilson, Charles	9	Hightower, Mark	19	McMullen, Lisa	26
Claudio, Evelyn	5	Williams, Monique	10	Cox, Shelley M.	20	Rogers, Larry	26
Clay, Rodwell	5	Whyte, Nina	11	Sapia, Julie Ann	20	Acosta, Jacqueline	27
Cordero, Angel	5	Mitchell, Leslie	12	Lopez, Desiree	21	Foote, Kareen	27
Garcia, Marcolina	5	Walker, Bernice	12	Torbicki Jr., Michael	21	Ibarra, Lilibeth	27
Simpson, Alisha	5	Belding, Stefanie	13	Cruz-Diaz, Ana Maria	22	Cartagena, Christina	28
Adams, Dewayne	6	Brown, Bruce	13	Howard, Anicka Nichol	22	Gonzalez, Benjamin	28
Hall, Erica	6	Foster, Tamisha	14	Fortuna, Lizzette	23	Mathis, Jean	28
Simon, Raymond	6	Lay, Wade	14	Howard, Robbin	23	O'Neil, June	29
Vazquez, Judith	6	Moore-Lewis, Mary	14	Lindo, Raquel	23	Matias, Norma	30
Lancia, Lucille J.	7	Thammavong, Sounthaly	14	McWeeny, Melissa	23	Dixon, Gena	31
Quimby, Dorothy	7	Fisher, Cyomara	15	Carlos, Soledad	24	Earvin, J'Mica	31
Martinez, Leticia	8	Moulton, Kimberly	15	Vazquez, Mayra	24	Graff, Deborah	31
Aguilera, Maria	9	Prude, Brice	15	Gaines, Wanda	25	Herrera, Milagros	31
Freeman, William	9	Rosado, Rachel	16	Harlow, Carey	25	Jefferson, Wilhemina	31
Kuczka, Sandra	9	Green, Debra	17	Stokes, Ronald Lee	25	Johnson, James	31
Latiff, Vinool	9	Cooper, Tewolde	18	Farrar, Margaret	26	Velazquez, Delthy	31

The Community Renewal Team, Inc. was formed in 1963 and is one of the oldest Community Action Agency in the country. We provide a range of antipoverty programs that help people become self-sufficient, including Early Care and Education; Meals on Wheels and meals at senior centers; criminal justice programs; affordable assisted living for seniors; neighborhood-based outreach; positive youth development; energy and weatherization assistance; employment and training; substance abuse and mental health services; emergency shelters and supportive housing. CRT is Connecticut's largest Community Action Agency.

June Birthdays

Canino, Tyrone	1	McMillan, Judith	9	Leone, Donna	16	Davis, Jerome	20
Dixon, Patricia	1	Walker, Gloria	9	Merwin, Mari	16	Deaner, Laurie	20
King, Joyce	1	Donnelly, Lynne	10	Cartagena, Yvette	17	Halpert, Karen	20
Clark, Roger	2	John, Claudette	10	Dosreis, Saundra	17	Brown, Faith	21
Allen-Frazier, Yvonne	3	Johnson, Carol	11	Gooden, Shernette	17	Grant, Novene	21
Bustamante, Miguel	3	Simpson, Warren Lee	11	Torres, Gladys	17	Guadalupe, Omar	21
Donovan, Patricia	4	Fothergill, Della	12	Biscette, Yvonne	18	Ames, Allyson	23
Austin, Wendy	5	Rosario, Tanya	12	Pestana, Alexander	18	Battle, Doris	23
Luna, Stacey	5	Scott, Shalai Michelle	12	Turner, Sellisa	18	Chung, Michelle	24
Bernardo, George	6	Terry, Sandra Jean	13	Williams, Zoey	18	Roman, Ruth	24
Martin, Rose	6	Tomassi Sr, Charles	13	Ellison, Elaine	19	Ramirez, Madeline	27
Rodriguez, Yeriam	6	Williams, Sabrina	13	Gumbs, Germaine	19	James, Deborah	30
Rodriguez, Ana	8	Holmes, Robin	14	Miller, Edwina	19	Quesnel, Beatrice	30
Siano, James	8	Walcott, Ayanna	15	Rodriguez, Janet	19		
Tanksley, Garland	8	Harrison, Cora	16	Castro, Sara	20		

InFocus is the bi-monthly newsletter for CRT employees, trustees, and volunteers. Please submit information or story ideas to InFocus at 555 Windsor St., Hartford, CT, 06120-2418, or email to Nancy Shapiro at NancyS@crtct.org, phone (860) 560-5471.

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 Nancy Pappas, Contributor;
 Maria Cheema, Layout and Design.

CRT InFocus lists employee birthdays as a service to those who wish to recognize their co-workers. If you do not want your birthday included, please contact Maria Cheema at CheemaM@crtct.org or (860) 560-5633.