



# Infocus

Jan/Feb 2008 | Vol. 19 No. 1

## Community Renewal Team's 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting



More than 150 members of the CRT Board of Trustees, staff and friends of CRT celebrated 44 years of community action at CRT's Annual Meeting held on Tuesday, November 20, 2007. The meeting provides an annual opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments, reflect on the previous year and honor CRT programs and staff for their achievements.



This year, we were pleased to honor board members Norman Jones and Daniel Schaefer for their years of service and dedication to the CRT Board. We also honored Marcolina Garcia, Heriberto "Tito" Martinez, Janet Rodriguez, Maria Cheema, Walter Parker, Sean Brown and Denise Moreno all of whom have a place on the CRT Wall of Excellence.



The following ECE staff received their Child Development Associate Credential, the initial step toward professionalism in Early Childhood Education: Flor Asanti, Alicia Bennett, Alejita Cruz, Ana Cruz-Diaz, Marta Diaz, Omar Guadalupe, Lilibeth Ibarra, Jeimy Pacheco, Irma Pichuile, Mayra Pino, Kiarema Rowe, Ana Sanchez, Gladys Torres, Jacqueline Werther and Margaret White. Marilyn Alicia, Melissa Howard and Sol Santana were recognized for completion of their Associates Degrees.



Finally, Monty Aheart, Jeri Gollinger and Cathi Brewer, the staff of Meadows Real Estate Development were honored for excellence for the work of their department.

### CRT's Holiday Card

CRT was honored to have our annual holiday card designed by Craig "Scotty" Allen, a member of The Retreat Assisted Living community. Scotty is the unofficial artist in residence and was delighted to provide us with a warm holiday scene that served as the illustration for our card. At our Annual meeting, President/CEO Lena Rodriguez honored Scotty with the framed original design. For those who would like to purchase some of his cards, please see Sharon Cowell in the Executive Office. If you know of a client, a member of your family or anyone else who would like the opportunity to design a card for 2008, CRT would welcome the contribution.



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Infocus is a bi-monthly newsletter for employees and supporters of the Community Renewal Team. To suggest a story or submit a photo, please contact Connie Rose at 560-5456 or email me at [rosec@crct.org](mailto:rosec@crct.org).

# Spotlight

Program of the Month

## Family Service Centers



Traditionally the “front door” of the Agency, Community Services are often the first place that families encounter CRT programs. Staff at four Family Service Centers and four Suburban Outreach Offices continue to work with clients in crisis, helping them to address basic needs. However, Community Services are evolving beyond the basics. The department continues to strive to incorporate the Steps to Success framework while interacting with other Agency divisions to provide outreach services and act as a resource.

Services at the Hartford Family Service Centers were expanded in 2007 to offer Thursday evening and Saturday morning hours, to help those who work during the day. HSI workers are placed at CRT locations outside of the Service Centers, including the new Asian Family Services office on Park Street.



The Neighborhood Services department of Community Renewal Team provides a variety of services to the residents of Hartford, Middlesex and neighboring communities. Year-round, the Family Service Centers offer **case management services** that include but are not limited to referrals to food pantries, clothing banks, counseling services and housing programs. Offices are equipped with **computer labs** which are open to the public for housing and employment searches and an **emergency food pantry**. Family Service Centers also team up with FoodShare to **provide food to the community** on a bi-weekly basis.



Family Service Centers have brightened the holiday season for hundreds of children with the **distribution of toys** for children up to the age of 18.

The Family Service Centers are also preparing for the upcoming **income tax season**, where they file taxes free of charge!

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### HSI Tips (Human Service Infrastructure)

<b>Family Service Programs:</b>	Family Service Centers throughout Hartford & Middlesex counties assist individuals and families in meeting basic needs with access to skill-building opportunities that promote self-sufficiency.
<b>Who the Program Serves:</b>	Hartford and Middlesex county residents.
<b>Income Guidelines:</b>	None
<b>Program Synopsis:</b>	Services include assistance in meeting immediate basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Assessments of housing, employment, social service and other needs. Information and referrals to social services throughout the area. Community oriented workshops. Access to computers with internet access.
<b>Documentation Needed:</b>	Eligibility requirements vary by program. Eligibility information for these programs is available at each Family Service Center.

### News & Notes - Did You Know?

In November, the **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving** awarded \$1,033 to the RSVP Senior Outreach Program, as recommended by the Morton and Dinah Danseyar Family Foundation. The Outreach Program schedules social events for seniors throughout the year, including river cruises, holiday parties and more.

In November, **the Rosie's for All Kids Foundation**, a charity established by Rosie O'Donnell, awarded \$30,000 to CRT for purchasing children's computers. This award will cover computers, software and training for all of CRT's 52-week ECE classrooms.

At the beginning of December, CRT celebrated the reaccreditation of the **Idella Howell ECE Center** in Middletown. The National Association for the Education of the Young Child commended Unit Manager Lisa Ellis and her staff for being among the first to achieve certification under new and more rigorous standards.

In November, the **East Hartford Interfaith Ministries** solicited funds for our East Hartford Shelter, raising enough to cover a much-needed stove and washing machine. Fox-61 did a feature on Thanksgiving about the donation, interviewing shelter residents who were enjoying being able to cook their own holiday meal.

**Congratulations to David Walters** for being the proud recipient of the CFO of the Year Award presented by the Hartford Business Journal. At a wonderful lunch reception with over 200 business leaders, he was selected as one of 21 finalist in all business categories from numerous entries. In the end he was one of the seven recipients of CFO of the year award with only one other in the nonprofit category.

**Congratulations to Elizabeth Horton Sheff** for earning her Bachelor's Degree by passing her final exam with an "A" and a QPA of 3.702. The graduation ceremony will be in June, 2008.

### CRT's Holiday Party

The CRT Annual Holiday Celebration was a great success due to a new location and a great DJ. The Birch Meadow

Banquet Facility in Bloomfield provided delicious food and a warm and inviting atmosphere to celebrate the holidays and provided staff with an opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves and to get to know their co-workers outside of the business environment. A sellout crowd of 225 staff

and friends joined in the celebration. Staff are grateful to President/CEO Lena Rodriguez for making the event affordable to all staff.



## The Great CRT First Annual Chili Cook-Off

The CRT Social Planning Committee held its first annual Chili Cook-Off on Friday, November 30. Staff were treated to a variety of



unique chili recipes submitted by "Chiliheads" Sharon Cowell, Nancy Shapiro, Jon Coleman, Don Neel, Effie Brown, Glenn Gabienelli, Krista Heybruck, Andrea Bonello, Elizabeth Mosquera, Christine Schwartz, Hubert Schwann. Prize winners were selected by



Nancy Pappas, Lena Rodriguez and Linda Giuca, Food Editor of the Hartford Courant. Congratulations to Krista Heybruck the new Research Director whose 1<sup>st</sup> prize recipe recently appeared in the Hartford Courant Food section.

## Hoffman Family Delivers a Happy Holiday to CRT Clients

We are all familiar with the postal motto:

"Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these courageous couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds".

This motto was actually said about 2,500 years ago by the Greek historian, Herodotus in reference to the Persian mounted postal couriers whom he observed and held in high



esteem. But those workers cannot compare to CRT's esteemed Forensic Services staff including Mark Pallatino, Dan Dyson, Jeannot Dalompa and John Wierzbicki who braved all of the above in order to deliver 200 holiday baskets to families under the worst of weather conditions and didn't return to their home base until nearly midnight.



As a tribute to their late father, Burton Hoffman, the Hoffman family has for many years been delivering holiday cheer to some of CRT's neediest clients. CRT is truly grateful to the Hoffman family and to our staff who put the needs of our clients far ahead of their personal need to get home.

## Volunteer Income Tax Assistance 2008

The 2008 tax year is coming, and we are looking at building upon a very successful VITA/Earned Income Credit program. Last year, CRT staff and volunteers were able to assist over 2,200 low-income households in preparing and e-filing their state and federal tax returns. This effort resulted in nearly \$5.7 million dollars being returned to customers in Hartford, Middletown, East Hartford, and Manchester.

If there are other sites who may be interested in participating this year, please let us know, including identifying a person to be a site coordinator.

Employees Participating in VITA – We also want to identify staff in your departments who are interested in and will be approved by you to participate as tax preparers. We had a wonderful team last year and we were impressed by their dedication to deliver this much-needed service to the community. The training process will be somewhat different this year and will be coordinated internally by Andrea Hardy, (CRT HOME) and Jim Pestana. Please provide us a tentative list of potential participants (or expected number).

CRT is looking forward to another successful season. Thank you for your help. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the program via email or call Elizabeth Horton Sheff at 560-5501, Jim Pestana at 560-5769, or Andrea Hardy at 560-4210.

## HSI Tips (Human Service Infrastructure)

Who the Program Serves: Low Income working families

Income Guidelines: None

### LOCATIONS FOR TAX PREPARATION:

Hartford: 555 Windsor Street, 1229 Albany Avenue, 395 Wethersfield Ave  
 Middletown: 44 Hamlin Street  
 East Hartford: Connecticut Training Center  
 Goodwin College  
 East Hartford Shelter  
 Manchester: 479 Main Street

Program Synopsis: IRS trained volunteers at CRT Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester & Middletown. CRT VITA volunteers help taxpayers prepare basic tax return forms. The tax returns are filed electronically from the sites at no cost.

Documentation Needed: All W2's for household, 1099 Forms (if any), Social Security Card(s) or individual Taxpayer ID Number(s) for all household members, last years tax return (if you have one) Childcare provider name, address & tax ID number. Education expenses and student loan information or Direct Deposit, a check or savings account number with routing number. Any other tax-related documents you have received.

## F U N F A C T S

- All the planets in our solar system rotate counter-clockwise, except Venus. It is the only planet that rotates clockwise. The planet Pluto sees the sun every 48 years.
- India invented the Number System. Zero was invented by Aryabhata.
- The first people to write music were the Greeks.
- You share your birthday with at least 9 million other people in the world.
- In the dead sea the water is so salty that people can float in it without swimming. They can even sit in the water and read a book.
- In Yakutsk, Siberia the temperature is 46° below zero. So cold, milk freezes as soon as it comes out of a cow. It is delivered in round chunks, not bottles.
- A dragonfly has a lifespan of 24 hours. A caterpillar has twelve eyes.
- The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.
- The U.S. Capitol Building has 365 steps-one representing each day of the year (except of course leap year).
- If all of your DNA was stretched out, it would reach to the moon 6,000 times.



## Black History Month

Harriet Ross was born in Dorchester County, Maryland in 1820. Her parents were from the Ashanti tribe of West Africa, and they worked as slaves on the Brodas plantation. In addition to producing lumber, Edward Brodas raised slaves to rent and sell. Life was difficult on the plantation, and Harriet was hired out as a laborer by the age of 5.



Harriet did not like to work indoors, and her masters routinely beat her. By her early teens, Harriet was no longer allowed to work indoors and was hired out as a field hand. She was a hard worker but considered defiant and rebellious. When she was 15 years old, Harriet tried to help a runaway slave. The overseer hit her in the head with a lead weight, which put Harriet in a coma. It took months for her to recover, and for the rest of her life, Harriet suffered from blackouts.

In 1844, Harriet married a free black man named John Tubman. Harriet remained a slave. Although she was married, Harriet lived in fear of being shipped to the deep South, a virtual death sentence for any slave. In 1849, her fears were realized when the owner of the Brodas plantation died and many of the slaves were scheduled to be sold. After hearing of her fate, Harriet planned to escape that very night. She knew her husband would expose her, so the only person she informed was her sister.

Harriet made the 90-mile trip to the Mason-Dixon line with the help of contacts along the Underground Railroad. She had to hike through swamps and woodland. Harriet's trip was successful, and she settled in Philadelphia. She worked as a dishwasher and made plans to rescue her family. The next year, Harriet traveled back to Maryland and rescued her sister's family.

Over time, Harriet became quite well known and huge rewards were offered for her capture. Harriet was the master of disguise. A former master did not even recognize her when they ran into each other on the street. She was nicknamed the "Moses of her people" for leading them to freedom. In all, Harriet made 19 trips on the Underground Railroad and freed more than 300 slaves.

### MORE BLACK AFRICAN AMERICAN HEROS

**Garrett Augustus Morgan** invented the automatic traffic signal, as well as, the gas mask used by soldiers in World War I and by firemen in the early 1900's.

**Sojourner Truth** was a true force in the abolitionist movement, as well as, a preacher. She added the women's rights movement to her cause in 1859.

**George Washington Carver** is a black inventor who invented hundreds of uses for peanuts, soybeans, pecans, and sweet potatoes. Carver, who was born in 1864 in Missouri, found ways to use these traditional food items to make adhesives, bleach, instant coffee, mayonnaise, meat tenderizer, pavement, paper, shaving cream, synthetic rubber, and wood stain. Carver didn't patent or make any money from most of these discoveries. He's known for donating these inventions to mankind.

**Dr. Daniel Hale Williams** is known for performing the first open heart surgery in 1893. Williams was the only black inventor at the time to be a member of the American College of Surgeons. His surgery was considered earth-shattering at the time because he opened the patient's chest to stitch a small wound in his heart.

**Benjamin Banneker** was a self-educated scientist, astronomer, inventor, writer, and antislavery publicist. He built a striking clock entirely from wood, published a Farmers' Almanac, and actively campaigned against slavery. He was one of the first African Americans to gain distinction in science.

**Charles Drew** researched blood plasma and transfusions in New York City. It was during his work at Columbia University where he made his discoveries relating to the preservation of blood. By separating the liquid red blood cells from the near solid plasma and freezing the two separately, he found that blood could be preserved and reconstituted at a later date. Dr. Drew also established the American Red Cross blood bank, of which he was the first director, and he organized the world's first blood bank drive, nicknamed "Blood for Britain".

**Garrett Morgan** invented a gas mask, a traffic signal, and several other inventions. Garrett Morgan was an inventor and businessman from Cleveland who invented a device called the Morgan safety hood and smoke protector in 1914. On July 25, 1916, Garrett Morgan made national news for using his gas mask to rescue 32 men trapped during an explosion in an underground tunnel 250 feet beneath Lake Erie.

## Employee Recognition

CRT launched its expanded Employee Recognition Program by introducing the **Wall of Excellence** in the 3rd floor lobby by 555 Windsor Street. Each month managers from an assigned department recognize an employee who continuously provides exceptional service to the Agency, and within the community. This employee is honored on the Wall of Excellence. Exceptional performers receive:

- \$500 CRT Bucks
- A certificate profiling "why" the individual was selected
- A financial reward of \$100 (after deductions)
- Their photo and nameplate from the "Wall" at year-end
- Recognition at a reception held in the employee's honor



### SEPTEMBER

**Sean Brown** demonstrates a high degree of decorum and professionalism in his role as a family service worker for ECE. Regardless of the circumstances, he responds with quiet reverence and respect. Modest and humble, Sean combines an advanced business management education with a sense of compassion and sensitivity to attend to families' needs. He listens, gains perspective from their point of view, then responds with strategies to resolve issues.



### OCTOBER

**Denise Moreno's** relationship with CRT began as a Head Start parent and quickly transitioned as she moved into her role as a family service worker for ECE. Considered a "go-to" person by her peers, Denise works with staff to develop community based resources and cross-agency relationships, and is exceptional at advocating on behalf of families. Last year co-workers applauded her for her helpfulness and willingness to assist with resources. With a quiet, humble and effective spirit, she motivates others to look further, push harder, and advocate for solutions.

## Sheldon Oaks Early Care & Education Center

The CRT Early Care and Education Program will open its newest site early in 2008. The Sheldon Oaks Early Care and Education Center located at 79 Van Block Avenue will provide 36 new School Readiness slots to three and four year old children residing in Hartford. The center will be open from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm and will offer comprehensive services on a sliding fee scale. Maria Franco will serve as Unit Manager. The grand opening is expected to take place in January.

▼ **New Employees**

**ECE**

Linda M. Ferguson  
Susana Theresa Grados  
Carmen M. Rivera  
Derrick A. Perry

**Finance**

John A. Stevens

**Nutrition**

Rhonald L. Williamson  
Van T. Green

**Retreat**

Yolanda Rivera  
Keith Murphy

**Supplemental Ed. Services**

Messha St Juste  
Carolyn Taylor  
Kathleen Snow

**New Employee Orientation**

The consensus: New Employee Orientations are value-added! Since April, 140 new full and part time regular employees have participated in the formal Orientation program, and HR continues to receive great reviews! The best news is that folks feel more informed and better prepared to take on their new roles, and represent clients, the Agency and themselves well.

**Training**

CRT Fundamentals workshops continued for new employees only. A special session of Fundamentals was facilitated for 21 Nutrition Café Managers at their Statewide Conference in Wallingford. The Training database is being updated and new dates for Fundamentals training will be announced for full and part time regular employees who have not yet attended.

**Education Works!**

On October 6, 2007, faculty of Goodwin College began teaching ten-week ESL classes for ECE employees who desired to improve their English speaking skills. Classes have been held on Saturday mornings from 9am to 12 noon in the Lumsden Center at 555. Initially, other employees volunteered their time to provide child care so that coworkers could attend class. The New Year is generally a time when people make "resolutions". Some resolve to return to school to further their education. Employees may want to take the time to access our Intranet link "**Scholarship Directory**" to research grants, scholarships and other financial aid information. Grants and scholarships go unused every year because people do not take the time to apply. It may take some extra work however the benefits could be a significant savings. Congratulations if you have decided make such an important commitment to yourself and in your future!

**As a reminder**, Human Resources hosts a library of books, audio and video tapes covering a variety of personal and professional development topics. Employees are welcome to borrow them at any time. Please phone **Nydia Rivera at 560-5655** for more information.

Contact **Valerie Taylor at 560-5801** in Human Resources for any information and/or suggestions regarding CRT Training Center.

**Winter Closing**

CRT management will attempt to make storm closing decisions as early as possible. Following are the general guidelines: When the state is **closed**, CRT will be closed, including ECE and The Elderly Nutrition Program. Only staff for McKinney, East Hartford Shelter, Fresh Start and Transitional Supervision need to report. State closing announcements are carried on most television and news radio stations. Information will also be communicated on Channel 8, Channel 3, Channel 30 and CBS Radio Stations (WTIC, WRCH, WZMX).

When the state is opening late (on delay), CRT will open at its regularly scheduled time.

Public school ECE sites will follow the Board of Education decision: If the building is closed or opening late, our site will follow the same schedule.

**However**, if a site is closed but the Agency is open, staff from that classroom are expected to report to 555 Windsor Street or other assigned location. Employees who fail to report when CRT is open will not be paid for that day. Use of sick time will only be allowed if a doctor's note is presented upon return to work.

**Child Care:** Please make sure that you have made alternative child care arrangements in advance. Your child's school may be closed when CRT remains open. Presently CRT does not have licensed arrangements for employees to bring their children to work. If you experience a hardship in meeting any of these expectations, please bring it to the attention of your supervisor immediately.



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## January Birthdays

Ferguson, Ellen	01	Magnuson, Patricia J.	10	Torres, Nancy G.	14	Perez, Esther	24
Fuentes, Cheryl	01	Murray, Monica	10	Welch, Ellen T	14	Karsky, Edith	25
Hussein, Abdiaziz	01	Prado, Angelica M.	10	Deas, Danny	15	Wierzbicki, John A.	27
Cummings, Carlene	03	Anderson, Shirley	11	Brown, Sonia H	16	Crosby, Ann M	28
Johnson, Lynn	03	Fowler, Carmen R.	11	King, Janice E	16	Cruz, Alejita	28
Toro, Louise	03	Peterson, Carla	11	Sanchez, Silva	16	Rose, William Joseph	28
Payne, Gregory K	04	Rosemond, Belinda J.	11	Zuk, Mary K.	16	McCall, Randy	29
Ketner, David	05	Smalling, Cecilia	11	Mauldin, Justin	17	Reid, George	29
Rivera, Reyes A.	06	Schwartz, Christine A.	12	Corvalan, Alejandra	18	Hanley, Jeanne Colette	30
Escalera, Luis Alberto	07	Brathwaite, Mary	13	Wright-Weidman, Joan	20	Medlin, Michael	30
Rodgers, Carlo A	07	Kovall, Deborah C	13	Delgado, Maribel	22	Moreno, Denise	30
Aiken, Janie	08	Perez, Madeline	13	Salazar, Myriam	22	Amaro, Arlene E.	31
Montalvo, Marilyn	08	Stavola, Leticia	13	Feliciano, Maria L.	23	Rivera, Magda	31
Reyes, Lucy	08	Torres, Irma	13	Hernandez, Jacqueline	23		
Sierra, Migdalia	08	Darveau, Miriam	14	Jackson, Lakeesha D.	23		
Pagan, Roselyn	09	St Juste, Messha	14	Freddo, Heather L.	24		

## February Birthdays

Carmona, Judith P	02	Shapiro, Nancy	07	Weston Piexotto, Len	13	Cicero, Georgette	22
Lanway, Stacia L.	02	Hyde, Rosalie	08	Chadha, Mohinder	14	Dillon Jr, George	22
Lopez, Iesha	02	Leon, Miriam	08	Clarke, Erna G.	14	Rodriguez-Ortiz, Teresa	22
Mapp, Gary T.	03	Oliver, Wanda Ivonne	08	Ramos, Magda	14	Smith, Patricia A	22
Streb, Lisa M.	03	Vecchitto, Elia Marie	08	Correa, Wilda	15	Wright, Martha W	22
Alexander, Imogene	04	Lopez, Monica	09	LaFlamme, Michel Serge	16	Carreon, Silvana	23
Biscette, Theresa	04	Pichiule, Irma E	09	Comulada, Jessica	17	Jones, Steven	23
Jackson, Marcia	04	Jones, Denise M.	10	Keyser, Jennifer L.	18	Grant, Dennis	25
Lynn, Fredrick M	04	Jones, Renee	10	Rodriguez, Teresa	18	Jackson, Ebony T.	26
Pare, Lisa	04	Andrades, Christina	11	Taylor, Kenneth W	18	Ellis, Lisa T	27
Hulien, Deborah Sheila	05	Belin, Elaine	11	Davila, Milagros	20	Gibson, Mildred	27
Steere, Elizabeth M.	05	Carter, Aurra	11	Hayes, Debra	20	Hardy, Kimberly	28
Holloman, Leatha	06	Hin-McCormick, Mui Mui	12	Howard, Melissa D	21	King, Myra	28
Delgado, Jonathan	07	Harrington, Christa J.	13	Oates, Glenwood	21		
Evans, Jasmine	07	Walter, Jeremy A.	13	Campbell, Mary	22		

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 anti-poverty 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.

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 Cornelia Rose at [rosec@crctct.org](mailto:rosec@crctct.org), phone (860) 560-5456.

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