the Community Voice

CHARTER OAK COMMUNITIES

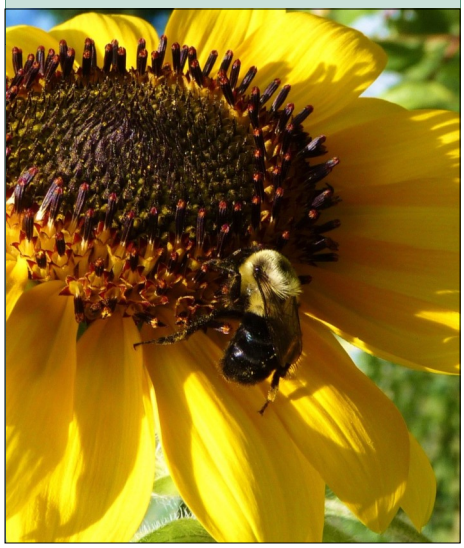
NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR COC RESIDENTS

Vincent J. Tufo
Executive Director and CEO
Jonathan Gottlieb
Vice President, Rippowam Corp.
Lisa Reynolds
Director of Finance
Natalie Coard
Director of Property and Facilities Management
Christine Young, *Editor*

Board Meetings for 2016:

- ***April 27, 2016***
- ***May 25, 2016 (East Side - Custer Street)***
- ***June 22, 2016***
- ***July 27, 2016***
- ***August 24, 2016***
- ***September 28, 2016***
- ***October 26, 2016***
- ***November 16, 2016***
- ***December 14, 2016***

*Meetings are Wednesday evenings and begin at 6:00 p.m. at Post House, 40 Clinton Avenue, **except for the May meeting noted above,** in the first-floor meeting room.*



Fairgate Farm Prepares for Spring Planting and Activities

We are happy that spring has arrived and Fairgate Farm operations are now in full swing! The Farm landscape is changing quickly, our fruit trees are budding, and spring flowers are enjoying the warming weather.

Healthy, productive plants require a quality place to grow. We've tested and organically amended our fields, and raised beds to ensure "happy," vibrant plants. Currently, the greenhouse is home to all of our fruiting "vegetables." All plants were started from seed on the Farm; soon they will have a new home outside and begin setting their roots.

This year's crops will be plentiful and diverse. We are anticipating nearly 100 different varieties of fruits and vegetables. The many different crops complement the diversity of our West Side community.

March was National Nutrition Education Month. Fairgate Farm hosted healthy-cooking classes emphasizing nutrition education at multiple organizations, including four different Childcare Learning Center locations, the

YMCA, and the Ferguson Library. Parents and children worked together to prepare fun, tasty, affordable meals while learning about the health benefits of each ingredient.

We have many exciting projects planned this year, but some of the latest "Farm buzz" is the introduction of beehives at Fairgate Farm! Over the past few years, the local bees have been working hard on our Farm. There will be many benefits to beehives on the Farm: Beekeeping education (for people!), improved pollinating, and producing local Fairgate Farm honey! Consuming the Farm's honey can help those who suffer from pollen allergies during the blooming season when pollen is in the air.

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COC Employee Profile: Maxon Keating

Harvesting homegrown tomatoes and walking through native tallgrass prairies hunting wild asparagus, canning pears, pickling cucumbers and making homemade salsa were some of Maxon Keating's first childhood experiences outdoors and in his father's garden in South Dakota. This, he says, is where his passion for farming developed. Today, COC is fortunate to have Maxon as the Fairgate Farm coordinator at our thriving Farm!

Maxon Keating with interns Crystal Nyanteh and Marc Charles, from the City of Stamford Mayor's Youth Program

Maxon received a B.S. degree in Environmental Science from Southwest Minnesota State University. While in college, he performed community health outreach and organic farming in Brazil. In 2015 he completed a one-year program in Biodynamic Farming from Pfeiffer Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York. Biodynamic farming is the study of the entire farm as one living organism, and utilizes sustainable organic practices to strengthen the fertility of the land, not degrade it.

Maxon has worked at Fairgate Farm in different capacities since May 2014. Prior to his tenure at the Farm, he taught nutrition education and culinary classes for Veggiecation, LLC, which teaches children to relate with vegetables. As our Farm coordinator, Maxon can be found throughout Stamford at schools and organizations providing farming and nutrition education programs.

This outreach has included introducing worms in the classroom so children can learn why they're important in gardens. "Worms are always an exciting learning tool when working with children," Maxon explains. "Kids understand how even the smallest and often unseen organisms in our soil are not only helpful, but a necessity to a healthy environment."

Maxon is excited to be in his new role and sees enormous value in building a sustainable community based on good nutrition, health and collaboration. "I love seeing various families working together in a safe environment, while sharing the common goal of building a stronger community," he says. "We all have something to learn from one another and the potential to contribute positively."

Please join Maxon and the community as a volunteer at Fairgate Farm this season!

"Take a book, Leave a book"

"The Little Libraries" located at the Custer Street office, 32-34 Custer Street, and the Oak Park office, 73 Dale Street, are open and ready for visitors! The libraries have received donations of over 1,000 books! They are in great condition, many are hard covers, and they range in genres (mystery, romance, classic literature, non-fiction, history, design, music, etc.). Additionally, the library has received 50 children's books.

The theme of the libraries is "take a book, leave a book," though everyone is welcome to visit and take a book regardless of whether they have one to leave.

We encourage all residents to use both libraries. If anyone is interested in donating gently used books, donations can be made at the Custer Street office Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.

Emily Symeon Celebrates her 100th Birthday

Emily Symeon celebrated her 100th birthday at Wormser Congregate February 12, 2016. A luncheon was held with Emily in her birthday crown. The celebration featured cake, balloons, and one of her favorite polish dishes, stuffed cabbage, known in Polish as "golumki." Family, friends, Channel 12 News and Caroline Simmons, a Connecticut State Legislator, were all in attendance. Emily's secret to being a centenarian, she explains, is to "Make the best of your situation, roll along with life, and don't worry; everything will have its way of working out and be alright."

Emily was the only daughter of Polish immigrants who settled in Stamford before World War I. She grew up in the South End of Stamford with five brothers. Emily reminisces on the active Polish community she grew up in, including attending church each week, and family and friends in abundance to play street games such as hopscotch, dodge ball, and run-chief-run.

Emily attended Short's Secretarial School in Stamford and held various positions over the years doing office work. She retired after working for Grant Airmass for 29 years, at the age of 79. Emily met her husband in Stamford and raised three sons, who all went to college on sports scholarships. Baseball is in their blood – one of her brothers was signed by the Boston Red Sox. Her children playing baseball seemed inevitable. Today, Emily beams when talking about her family, which includes seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

At 100-years old, Emily keeps a busy schedule. Delighted to be at Wormser Congregate, she keeps active every day. Emily is pleased with the staff and she raves about the nutritious meals. She gave up driving at the age of 98, so Emily can no longer drive herself to Holy Name Church, but instead watches mass daily on her TV and attends the weekly church service on Sunday at Wormser.

To keep her brain sharp, Emily shared her secret of reading Nora Roberts' romance novels. Additionally, Emily participates in Bingo, Rummy Cube, and weekly exercise class. Weekly, she is driven to Holy Name Church to play pinochle with her friends.

Emily (center) celebrates her 100th birthday with friends. Left to right, Jerry Bosak, Jr., Jerry Bosak, Sr. and COC Board member Kristella Garcia-Bosak.

Fairgate Farm Prepares for Spring Planting *(Continued from Page 1)*

We are delighted to announce Maxon Keating as our new Farm coordinator/community builder. His experience in sustainable organic agriculture and community health education will assist in our mission of building healthy, vibrant communities. See Maxon featured this month in the Employee Profile.

Please contact Maxon to learn more about the many **volunteer opportunities** at the Farm. All volunteers receive fresh organic produce free of charge. We're a community Farm that is stronger when we work together, so let's learn and grow together!

Telephone: (203) 898-1171 or Email:
MKeating@CharterOakCommunities.org or
FairgateFarm@gmail.com

Hours of Operation at the Farm:
Monday: 8 am – 12 pm & 3 pm to 7 pm
Wednesday: 8 am – 12 pm & 3 pm to 7 pm
Thursday: 8 am – 12 pm & 3 pm to 7 pm
Saturday: 8 am – 12 pm

Spring Cleaning Time!

Spring is the season of renewal! A good spring cleaning to reduce clutter in your home can do wonders for your personal energy. Below are tips to effectively reduce clutter in your home:

* Get everyone in your family to assist in decluttering/organizing.
* Establish a specific place for everyday items, such as hooks for keys, a basket for mail, etc.
* If the countertop or table surface isn't visible, it's time to take action.
* Toss out unused magazines, newspapers, and junk mail.
* When bringing new items into your house, try to make sure something old goes out.
* Find appropriate places in your home for items you will use and want to keep.
* If you aren't using it, get rid of it!
* Consider donating unwanted items to charity, selling them, or recycling them.

Enjoy the Outdoors this Spring

Courtesy of Christina Turiano of Family Centers

Now that the weather is warming up it's time to take advantage of Stamford's amenities and the beautiful spring weather! Here are a few suggestions for how to get out of the house after the chilly winter:

Stamford Manor residents out for a morning walk at Mill River Park. Left to right, Mayra Mundaray, Ricky Morales, and Santiago Pavot.

* **Take a walk in your local park**. Stamford is filled with parks, and most of COC's units are within walking distance of a park. Even if you just step outside of your residence and walk around the block a few times, you're doing wonders for your health.
* **Visit the Stamford Museum & Nature Center** located at 39 Scofieldtown Road, Stamford. Consider taking a family hike, being a Sunday Explorer or visiting their Astronomy Observatory on Friday evenings for a reduced fee of $5. Daily admission is free for children under 3, $5 for children under 17, $8 for seniors, and $10 for adults. Telephone (203) 322-1646 or visit their website www.StamfordMuseum.org for additional information.
* **Visit the Ferguson Library Bookmobile.** To find out when the Bookmobile will be in your area, call (203) 964-1000 or visit the calendar on the library's website www.fergusonlibrary.org. Consider getting a book and bringing it with you to a park. Bring along a towel and some lunch, and you're ready for the perfect spring picnic!