

## Fairgate Farm Harvest Festival: Saturday, October 17

**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**

Fairgate Farm had an amazing summer, but the season isn't over yet! We'll be celebrating our bountiful year at our annual **Harvest Festival, Saturday, October 17 from noon to 2:00 p.m.** As for all Fairgate Farm festivals, this one is open to all – **no registration is required — and is free!**

Plans include pumpkin painting and crafts, face painting, stories, and other activities for small children. There also will be samples of special “fruits of the farm,” including watermelon and grilled corn, plus recipes and cooking demonstrations, juicing, pickling, and more!

Our Harvest Festival marks the end of the fifth growing season, with many farm improvements and new crops, including fruit trees (such as plum, peach, and apple). Other 2015 highlights included a successful Strawberry Festival in June;



*Farm Manager Bill Callion serves watermelon at the 2014 Harvest Festival.*

expansion of our volunteer program, with many new corporate supporters and individual “farmers” joining our ranks; and an enthusiastic group of returnees and new visitors participating in our Farm-to-Table six-week family workshop series. In September a “Yoga at the Farm” session taught by ShopRite dietitian and Farm-to-Table chef Cora Ragaini, and a Pickling Class were held for all!



*Pumpkin painting for the whole family at Fairgate Farm!*

### Board Meetings for 2015:

- **October 28th**
- **November 18th**
- **December 16th**

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

### Procurement

**Charter Oak Communities** will be procuring **A&E and Security Services** in October and November.





## COC Employee Profile: Fred Burrows



Fred Burrows joined COC in June 2015 as a Maintenance Mechanic II. He takes care of COC's Westside properties, which include Clinton Manor, Quintard Manor, Taylor Street Apartments, Post House, Glenbrook Manor, Rippowam Manor, Connecticut Avenue, Stamford Manor, and Czescik Homes. Fred enjoys the diverse work, great communication, and teamwork with the staff at COC. He especially likes hearing the positive feedback from residents on the work he performs.

Fred previously had worked at Milford Redevelopment and Partnership Housing (Milford Housing Authority) as a maintenance mechanic. In addition, he

works part time as a maintenance mechanic/carpenter for the nonprofit Family and Children's Agency in Norwalk.

Born in Connecticut, Fred attended Jonathan Law High School. He began his career with on-the-job training remodeling and building homes. Working in the building trade around the country, he has lived in Texas, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Being an avid outdoorsman, Fred likes to hike in the mountains and swim in lakes and beaches in the area. An adventurer, he has traveled across the country in a recreational vehicle and enjoys motorcycles and boating. Volunteering for the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Fred performs patrols in Long Island Sound. He also holds a Captain's License.

Fred is the proud dad of two daughters. Watching his daughters cheerlead and play lacrosse on the sidelines, he admires their spirit and energy for the games. He also finds pleasure in cooking and is known by family and friends to make amazing smoked ribs!

## "High Performer" Designation Received



Our maintenance team is to be congratulated in assisting COC in receiving a "High Performer" rating from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The team went above and beyond to secure this rating. Their dedication to improving the lives of our residents and properties is a testament to their commitment.

The Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) scoring is based on ratings in four key areas – physical condition, financial condition, management operations, and capital fund programs. In addition, inspections are performed on building exteriors, dwelling units, dwelling systems, and common areas. To be classified in the "High Performer" category, housing authorities must receive an overall score of at least 90 percent or greater. This is based on total available points in the HUD uniform rating system (up to 100 points).

COC's performance earned an overall score of 93! Congratulations to the entire maintenance team for their hard work in achieving this prestigious recognition.

## Update on COC Projects

**Ursula Park Exterior Renovations Phase 2** roof work began at Ursula Park in September. Upon completion of the roof, the windows and siding will be replaced. Residents will be informed of the schedule as the work gets closer to being implemented.

The **Rippowam Manor Resident Committee** has been selected to provide input for choosing the new flooring to be installed in all common hallways and the Community Room. They will be meeting with COCs' staff and architect Carmelo Rosa to discuss various types of flooring and cost. Selection of the flooring and project bidding will follow. A November bid date is anticipated.

**Wormser Congregate** will be receiving an updated Fire Alarm System with new smoke detectors, heat detectors, pull stations, and horn/strobe units. This will enhance the recently completed work on the Sprinkler System/Fire Pump installation and make the building safer for residents.

The emergency generator installation at **Scofield Manor** is anticipated to be completed by November. Final coordination is taking place to bring this all-important system fully operational.



## Scholarship Recipient: Darnell Morris



Left to right: Darnell Morris with Sam Rivera

Darnell Morris, a 20-year old resident of Lawn Hill Terrace, was selected as one of five scholarship recipients of the Housing Authority Insurance Inc.'s

Affordable Housing Resident Scholarship program. Excited to hear the news, he is the first Charter Oak Communities resident to win this honor. "I was shocked to learn I made the final five recipients," Darnell remarked. "I was very surprised and honored!"

Veronica, his mom, and Sam Rivera, Resident Service Coordinator for Family Centers, were instrumental in getting the information to him at college last spring. According to Darnell, "Every year my mother pushes me to apply for scholarships, and she insisted I apply to this one." Veronica, an active member of the community, takes every opportunity she has to assist in her son's education, and

wasted no time making sure he submitted all documents in a timely manner.

Last month, Darnell began his junior year at Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island. He is studying to be a network engineer and would like to obtain an internship next summer. Ready to focus on his studies this semester, he is thinking into the future at Johnson and Wales by doing an additional year for his Master's degree. While home from school this summer, Darnell worked full time as an assistant teacher for a daycare in Stamford. "It was a busy summer," he recalls. "My family and I are grateful for this opportunity, and I plan on working hard to make them proud."

## Resident Corner: Filomena DeMarino

Filomena's garden was an abundant display of beautiful flowers in bloom on the back terrace of Wormser Congregate this summer. Sunflowers, hibiscus, marigolds, and black-eyed Susans were among the flowers, along with tall stalks of purple velvet fan-shaped flowers and other exotic plants. Her "green thumb" was evident in growing vegetables as well. The tomatoes, basil, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, parsley, and rosemary grown were used for Wormser's salad fixings. Filomena's secret to her garden's great success, she explains, "includes daily pruning, nourishment, and rainwater," which she collects in a bucket from the gutters at Wormser.

A Wormser resident for over eight years, she likes its cleanliness, the quiet, and the freedom to do the things she loves. Crocheting, cooking, and baking are some of the additional activities and talents she learned as a young girl growing up in Italy. In her apartment, she has many crocheted pillows on display. A favorite bakery item shared with friends, family, and residents are her homemade "angel wings." At 85-years old, Filomena is independent and enjoys walking to Trader Joe's for her groceries.

Born in Italy, she came to the United States as Mrs. John DiMarino. Her husband was a skilled baker in Stamford, and

Filomena worked as a cook for several Italian restaurants in the area, including Mario the Baker and Pellicci's. They were blessed with their son, Joe, who served in the United States Army. Today, he is a DJ in Las Vegas and has worked for the MGM Grand Hotel.

Filomena has been fortunate to visit with her son in Las Vegas and would like to visit again next year. Also, she has traveled to Boston to spend time with her brother; but her visit to Montreal last year to see her niece and nephew was the most memorable. The highlight, she said, was visiting Old Montreal and experiencing its European charm!



Filomena with Property Manager Laura Augustyn at Wormser Congregate.



**Working  
SMOKE ALARMS  
SAVE LIVES**

**Never remove batteries from the smoke detector in your unit. Questions on your smoke detector should be directed to the COC work order staff: West Side developments call (203) 977-1491 or East Side Developments call (203) 977-1465.**



**Harvest Festival ~ Fairgate Farm**  
**129 Stillwater Avenue**  
**Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup> from Noon to 2:00 p.m.**

**Celebrate the Season's Bounty with autumn harvest recipes, food tastings, games, crafts, and fun. This family-focused festival is free and open to all!**

## Your Child's Accomplishments

By Donna Spellman, Family Centers  
Director of Self Sufficiency and Independent Living

When my son entered a new nursery school at the age of three, I arrived to pick him up on his first day to hear two mothers having a conversation about how well their three-year olds were reading! Reading, I wondered? I was much more concerned about whether or not my son took a nap and remembered to share! I checked in with his teacher who reported that he had been particularly "friendly and polite." I thought to myself, "Well, he might not be reading at the age of three, but hearing that he's friendly and polite is the kind of feedback I want to hear. That's the person that I want my son to be."

When my daughter was in second grade, she had a teacher who would reward students for random acts of kindness. These random acts included times when a student would offer to help another student or when a student would compliment another student. There were many times that my daughter would earn this type of reward, and each time she would come home with one, I would once again shake my head and smile, thinking, "I'm so proud of her. She's becoming a good, caring person."

As parents it's all too easy for us to get caught up in our children's grades, their reading levels, at what age they completed their first "chapter book," whether or not they've been chosen for advanced placements, etc. Of course we want to know that our children are reaching appropriate milestones and are performing well. But despite conscious attempts to not compare my children to others, I have occasionally found myself doing just the opposite and getting caught up in academic competition.

Somehow, I've become overly sensitive to statements like, "My child read his first book at the age of two," or, "My child could recite the Periodic Table of Elements at the age of three." When I hear that I just want to scream, "My children have been complimented for becoming good, caring people!" I'm not suggesting that smart children don't have good manners. And of course, it's a wonderful accomplishment when a child has a special talent or excels in something. Sometimes I feel like we focus so much of our attention on how advanced our children can be that we often take the risk of missing out on enjoying the people our children are growing up to become.

When we feel like we're becoming trapped in the world of academic competition and questioning ourselves about our children's educational achievements, perhaps we might want to take a step back and look at who our children have become. How do they interact with their friends? Are they sensitive? Polite? Do they reach out to others? Do they assert themselves appropriately? Do they show empathy? Sympathy?

I truly believe that as parents we have quite a bit of influence on our children's education. If we are positive, involved, and invested in their education, then it stands to reason that they will have a positive experience. How we model behavior is likely to have a huge influence on the type of adult they will grow up to be. When looking at their report cards, it's important to not only notice the grade, but also pay attention to the effort they put in. When at school conferences, ask about how they interact with other students. Are they polite? Are they helpful to others? I am quite certain that this will give you a glance into the adult they will grow up to become.