



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 2015:

- April 22, 2015
- May 27, 2015
- June 24, 2015
- July 22, 2015
- August 26, 2015
- September 30, 2015
- October 28, 2015
- November 18, 2015
- December 16, 2015

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



Procurement

As part of our ongoing effort to ensure bidders and contractors receive fair, impartial and equitable treatment, please review this area for future opportunities in Procurement. RFPs will be issued for Landscaping Services and Security Services soon.

What's Happening In Your Community? Get Involved!

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

Family Centers (FC), a human service agency serving lower Fairfield County, has been partnering with Charter Oak Communities (COC) for the past 12 years to provide on-site supportive services to residents throughout the community. Supportive services range from individual and family support to general information and referral services, community-based activities and events.



Family Centers' Resident Service Coordinators have hosted numerous events within COC such as the onsite Mobile Wellness Coach, pot-luck luncheons, on-site computer classes, on-site employment assistance, job-readiness assistance, fitness programs, individual and group counseling, and much more. Family Centers' onsite Resident Service Coordinators provide this type of support at Fairgate, Palmer Square, Westwood, Stamford Manor, Clinton Manor, Quintard Manor, Post House, Taylor Street, Lawn Avenue, Lawnhill Terrace, Sheridan, Oak Park, Ursula Park, Rippowam Manor, Glenbrook Manor and Greenfield.

To help improve the work described above and also involve residents, Family

Centers' Resident Service Coordinators and Charter Oak Communities' property managers have been working together to create opportunities for resident leadership throughout the Stamford community. For the past year, they have participated in a number of work groups and ongoing training to create and implement initiatives that best engage and support the resident population.

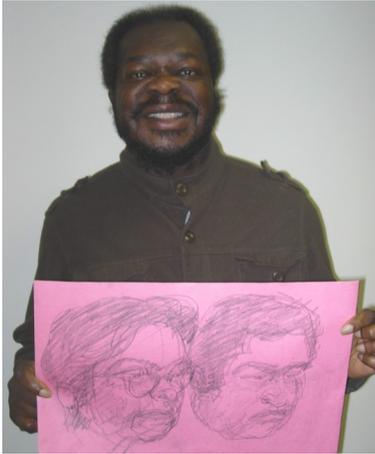
All initiatives involved resident input. Residents volunteered to become involved through small-discussion groups, by completing questionnaires, and through individual meetings with Resident Service Coordinators and property managers. Examples of successful teamwork include the re-development of the East Side Tenant Association, the development of numerous on-site food pantries, the development of winter clothing drives, a resident-led neighborhood watch and other efforts. With the support of the Family Centers and Charter Oak Communities staff, these events were all coordinated by residents.

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Resident Corner: Calvert Hutchings



Calvert Hutchings has lived at Post House for almost two years. Previously, he resided on Merrell Avenue in Stamford. Born in a small town outside Saint Andrew, Jamaica, Calvert enjoys living in Post House with all of its nearby amenities. He is grateful for the diverse activities Stamford has to offer, frequents the library, likes to travel and enjoys taking the train to New York to visit with family.

Calvert admitted his days living in Jamaica were difficult in comparison to living in Stamford. With only his mother to raise him, he walked miles to school and to the clinic for medical assistance. Calvert recalled he was "privileged" to have a refrigerator at the age of 17 and own his first TV at the age of 18. When visiting his grandfather's home in the mountains of Jamaica, there was no running water in the house. As he grew older, he would gather water from the

stream in a bucket, place it on his cotta, a piece of cloth in a circular shape that protects the head when carrying a heavy bucket, and balance it walking back to his grandfather's to provide water for the house.

With Jamaica under British rule, Calvert was happy to learn English from British nannies, beginning in kindergarten. In high school, Calvert's talent as an artist was discovered. He dropped out of high school to work as a cartoonist for a Jamaican newspaper, *The Daily Star*. Calvert worked for the newspaper for many years, but with only a high school education, it was difficult to make a living. Making little pay, he was forced to live in the "government yard," a slum neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica. That's the same Jamaican public-housing project that Bob Marley lived in and sang about famously in his songs.

Although Calvert and his mother loved Jamaica, they searched for a better life. They obtained their Green Cards and filed for U.S. citizenship, moving to America in the early 1980's. Fortunate to find work at Caldor's in its shipping and receiving departments, as well as at Securitas, Old Navy and CVS, Calvert missed sketching and drawing.

Luckily for Calvert, he was able to take time off from his jobs in the summer to visit his two brothers in England. There he would set up a stand on the sidewalk and sketch the local people. He loved working as an artist those summers and still enjoys sketching! Today, you may see Calvert at the train station or at a park on a sunny day drawing local people.

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We have heard from residents throughout the community praising these efforts. The result has been an increased feeling of support, awareness and appreciation for neighbors, and an increase in resident-led initiatives and ideas being shared. Above all, residents have reported an improvement in their quality of life.

Family Centers and Charter Oak Communities strongly encourage residents to get involved in this community engagement effort by attending an event, and by speaking with a Resident Service Coordinator or property manager to share ideas. Watch for announcements of upcoming events, activities and initiatives happening in and around your community. These events will be highlighted in newsletters, displayed on community calendars, placed in your mailboxes and promoted throughout your communities. Take advantage of the opportunities. Don't be a stranger in your own community, but rather, come out and enjoy the benefits of being involved and engaged.



Back row from left to right: Judy Paul, Kelly Johnson, Kimberley Jackson, Sam Rivera, Dan Persaud, Chris Warren. Front row, left to right: Shawnece Simmons, Monica Tinsley, Marie Belizor, Monique Moye.

Renter's Rebate For Elderly/Disabled Renters Tax-Relief Program

Renter's Rebate applications are available with the City of Stamford beginning April 1, 2015 through October 1, 2015. State law provides a reimbursement program for Connecticut renters who are 65 years of age or older, or if they are 50 years of age or older and the surviving spouse of a renter who at the time of the renter's death had qualified and was entitled to tax relief -- provided such spouse was living with the renter at the time of the renter's death, or 18 years of age or older and eligible to receive Social Security Disability benefits. Persons renting an apartment or room may be eligible for this program.

The renter's rebate amount is based on a graduated income scale and the amount of rent and utility payments (excluding telephone) made in the calendar year prior to the year in which the renter applies. Eligibility is based on incomes not exceeding certain limits. Additionally, there is a one-year state residency requirement. Grants are based upon income requirements shown in Connecticut General Statute (CGS) Section 12-170e.

If you have questions related to the Renter's Rebate Program, please call the program hotline at (860) 418-6377.



Safety Tips -

With the warm weather right around the corner, please note the following:

- ~ Grills are not permitted on COC balconies, patios or lawns.
- ~ Balconies are not storage units. Only chairs and small tables should be on balconies.
- ~ Bikes are not allowed in buildings. They should be stored outside on bike racks.
- ~ Commercial shopping carts are not allowed in buildings. Residents should purchase a small fold-up cart for shopping.



FAIRGATE FARM

Growing a Local Food System



The Farm Jam Strawberry Festival

will be held **Saturday, May 30th**, from **12:00 p.m - 2:00 p.m.**

There will be food samples, kid's crafts, music, garden tours, cooking demonstrations and recipes available.



A Spring Clean-up Kick-off event will be scheduled in early May.

We have lots planned for the summer season, including a return of our very popular **Farm-to-Table Family Workshops (mid July through late August)** and expanded community events -- dates for these events will be announced in early June.



Follow us on **Facebook** for updates www.facebook.com/FairgateFarm or email us at fairgatefarm@gmail.com

And, of course, we invite and encourage volunteers!
All levels of gardening experience are welcome!

