



the Community Voice

CHARTER OAK COMMUNITIES

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR COC RESIDENTS

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Remaining Board Meetings for 2014:

- Wednesday, December 10, 2014

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

Wormser Congregate Celebrates 25 Years of Operation



Margot Wormser, a Commissioner of the Stamford Housing Authority, dreamed of a place for seniors to age gracefully and live independently. Today, there are over 42 residents enjoying her dream at Wormser Congregate. To honor the 25th celebration, festivities included food, entertainment by Bojangles, and residents celebrating with family members and sponsors.

Clinton Manor Renovations

Charter Oak Communities (COC) is celebrating extensive cosmetic, repair, modernization and security renovations at Clinton Manor. For over a year, contractors worked throughout the building and grounds on a wide range of transformative updates. Funding for the renovations came from Low Income Housing Tax Credits issued by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, with equity investment from Boston Capital and loan funds from Bankwell, formerly the Bank of New Canaan.



Renovated Clinton Manor kitchen with new appliances. Photo courtesy of Carl Vernlund Photography

Completed work includes new windows and balcony doors for each apartment, as well as individual whole-unit A/C systems, renovated kitchens with new appliances, and completely renovated bathrooms. All doors and locks were changed. Additionally, 11 units were converted to full handicapped accessibility, which included enlarging the bathrooms, wider doors and closet set ups. These units were fully painted and re-floored, and new ceilings were installed.

Building-wide, the entire fire alarm system was replaced, and all common hallways and community spaces were completely renovated. This included the basement Community Room, common kitchen and public bathrooms. The boiler system was replaced and shut-off valves

were added to the water system. A new ejector pump and tank were added, as well.

The lobby received beautiful new flooring, lights and a new bank of mailboxes. The exterior of the building was restored and painted. Also, a new entry canopy and smaller side-door canopy were added, along with a new patio seating area. Outdoor site improvements included landscaping in the front of the building and having the parking lot re-paved.

“We’re quite pleased with the transformation at Clinton Manor, which reflects our continuing commitment to quality, safety, comfort and attractive housing,” said Vin Tufo, Executive Director and CEO. “This wasn’t just a facelift – we have modernized every apartment and public area, indoors and out, and improved life safety and energy efficiency. Residents can be proud of where they live, and know that sustainability and affordability can work hand in hand.”

Currently, Quintard Manor is undergoing similar renovations. Resident apartments, community facilities and management office spaces are undergoing full remodeling. The parking lot has been re-paved, and new entry canopies and doors are being added. Additionally, a new patio and landscaping have been added. Final completion for the Quintard Manor renovation is scheduled for Spring 2015.





COC Employee Profile: Elvin Rodriguez



Elvin Rodriguez joined COC in September 2014 as an eligibility specialist. He finds the role very gratifying as he enjoys helping people and feels he is really able to make a difference. Prior to joining COC, he was a graphic designer for a

family run business in Stamford, Printech. He enjoyed producing logos, brochures and business cards. Foremost, he learned that good customer service skills are crucial. Often, he recalls, you are the first point of contact and must strive to represent the company positively. This is the approach Elvin uses working at COC.

Born in Puerto Rico, he moved to Stamford as an infant with his parents and two brothers. Having grown up in Stamford and still residing in the City, he believes he is in a

great place to live! He enjoys the four seasons, the diverse activities Stamford offers and being an adventurer, which includes hiking, mountain biking and skiing. Overall, he is happy to call Stamford “home.”

Elvin’s mom and dad have moved back to Puerto Rico to retire, but Elvin enjoys family time with his wife, Jennifer, and sons Evan, 15 and Ethan, 7. In addition, he has an extended family which includes many cousins and nephews. His family values, he stresses, are strong. Annually, he and his cousins hold a family reunion at a local park to pay homage to the aunts and uncles who raised them to be the tight family they are today. The picnic features amazing food, laughter, music and Olympic-style games that are celebrated with winners receiving trophies and medals!

In his spare time, Elvin enjoys drawing, sketching and painting. He is a talented artist and will be bringing some of his artwork to hang in his office. Elvin recently took a family trip to Florida and the surrounding Orlando area to attend his nephew’s wedding. It was a wonderful time enjoyed by many family members!

Update on COC Projects

The Wormser Congregate Fire Pump and Backflow Prevention System has been tested and is in full operation. In addition, final repair work to the parking lot is to be completed. It is anticipated that all work will be complete in December.

The four additional dry valves that are part of the Sprinkler System Replacement at Stamford Manor were installed in November. This work completes the renovation to the Stamford Manor Sprinkler System.

Phase I, of the Roof, Siding, Window and Door Replacements at Ursula Park Townhouses, is nearing completion. The Roof replacements at 130 and 136 Ursula have been completed as well as the exterior sheathing. The windows and exterior doors have been replaced and it is anticipated that the exterior trim work will be finished within the next two weeks. The remaining three buildings at Ursula Park Townhouses, Phase II, will begin in the spring.

Additional projects planned and underway include the Generator Replacement and the Fascia, Soffit and Gutter Repair at Scofield Manor. Also at Scofield Manor, painting of the corridors and new floors are complete.

Coping with Seasonal Stress

The end of the year can be extra stressful, especially due to the holidays, family, work and financial pressures. Below are some tips to increase mental health and wellness during the holiday season:

Reduce stress – Examine the sources of your stress, discover health coping mechanisms, eliminate unnecessary stressors, accept situations you have no control of, and develop relaxation techniques that work for you.

Take time to reflect at the end of the day on everything that’s been good. Research shows that being grateful makes us happier.

Eat reasonably – It’s easy to indulge in rich and fattening foods this time of year – don’t punish yourself, but practice moderation and balance your diet whenever you get

the chance with healthier foods, fruits and vegetables.

Tap into your creative genius through creative writing, dancing, drawing, knitting or woodworking; honor your natural talents, abilities and passions.

Balance work, rest and play – This is really important. Keep your body healthy by getting enough sleep, taking time for exercise and accepting you can’t get to everything.

Smile! This makes you feel good as well as the person you smile at.

Spend time alone – Allow positive time for solitude so you can focus your thoughts.

Maintain a sense of humor when facing certain life situations – keep things in perspective.



Resident Corner: Tysheena Holeyfield



Tysheena Holeyfield has lived at Ursula Place since January 2013. A native of Stamford, she left her mom's home at 19 to be independent and self-sufficient. But, being a young, carefree adult, working part-time jobs, hanging out with friends all night and partying whenever she felt like it, she will tell you, got her nowhere. Being irresponsible and with nowhere to go, she says she was fortunate to reside with her grandmother for many years. In a small one-bedroom apartment with two small children to care for, living out of boxes, sleeping on the floor and couch, and not able to support her family with just a part-time job, she struggled to find a better plan.

Today, she is grateful to be at Ursula Place with a responsible plan and full-time job. With her children, Javion, 10, Demanii, 4, and Nazir, 2 --and her boyfriend-- she has made family life a priority. Seeking to do her best for her family, she works hard as a full-time mom and customer service representative at Regus in Stamford.

In addition, Tysheena is fortunate to have a relationship with her mom in Norwalk, and with two brothers and two sisters in Stamford. They have grown very close over the years and look forward to spending birthdays and the holidays together. Over the summer, her family was thrilled to have their first flying experience that included a trip to Disney World! Tysheena said they all enjoyed sunny Florida, and it was an adventure for everyone to remember.

In her spare time, Tysheena enjoys going to the movies, playing pool and bowling. Happy to have her family living on Ursula Place with good neighbors and a place for her children to grow and play with other children, she is looking forward to the growth and development of the East Side.

COC Food Drive

For the third year in a row, the Charter Oak Communities employee Food Drive was a great success. Four teams, comprising employees from COC and Rippowam Corporation, gathered food for Person to Person, a local food bank located in Darien. The winning COC team which collected the most food will be announced in December.

Last year, COC set a record of about 1,300 donated items for the Food Drive. Having an earlier start this year, we pledged a higher number of nonperishable food items.

COC's informal mission has always included bringing the spirit of caring and giving to the table. Once again, COC has come together as a team to provide for the greater good of the community in need!



Fairgate Farm Harvest Festival, Saturday, October 18th

The day was a great success with over 200 participants! Cooking demonstrations performed by Stamford Hospital, food samples, kids crafts, farm tours, music and fall vegetables were some of the many highlights enjoyed by all!





Safety Tips

COC is encouraging all residents to be safe and **call in work orders for the following:**



- ⇒ Carbon monoxide and smoke detectors if they are not working
- ⇒ Broken and missing switch covers and electrical outlet plates
- ⇒ Broken/cracked glass
- ⇒ Indoor and outdoor lighting fixtures and bulbs not working. As the season changes, days are getting shorter. Be sure outdoor lighting is in good working order. Good lighting can protect you against crime, as well as falls or accidents.

Contact the COC work-order staff during normal business hours of 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. **Please do not call** after hours with non-emergency issues that need repair during regular business hours (i.e., lighting, leaky faucet, etc.). **For the West Side developments, call (203) 977-1494. For the East Side developments, call (203) 977-1465.**

Residents of Lawnhill Terrace

The Residents of Lawnhill Terrace have recently formed a Resident Council. The Council seeks to educate, empower and unite Lawnhill residents. The council officers are as follows -- President, Michele Mason; Vice President, Judd Royere; Secretary, Nyrobi Andrea; Treasure, Jitzy Marrero; and Sergeant of Arms, Claudio Pagan.



Technology is Not Just for Young People

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

Family Centers has been providing computer and technology training in Stamford for the past 15 years. In the past five years, there has been a shift in our population of students. In 1999, the majority of our students were between the ages of 20 and 40. By the spring of 2014, our graduating students were between the ages of 18 and 72, the majority of students being ages 55 to 72. What has led to our aging population, and what is drawing older adults to our classes? After polling our participants, here's what we learned:

First, many of our seniors have children and grandchildren who are growing up in a tech-savvy world. In order to communicate with them, they feel that they have to start utilizing technology, for that's the language that their younger family members "speak." In fact, learning computer skills has been similar to learning a new language! I'm told by our older students that their high school or college-aged grandchildren seem to be only reachable via text. When our students were taught how to use smart phones, words cannot describe the excitement in the room! Before we knew it, the students were texting each other, laughing and cheering every time a new text was received. It was as if they were given access to the world!

Other seniors, many of whom have migrated here from other countries, have told me that learning how to use a computer, particularly the Internet, has helped them to reconnect with their native countries. They have learned to access their native newspapers, listen to their native radio shows and much more, all by using the Web! Again, to be in the room the very first time our students click on that big "Internet Explorer" button is one of the most fun and exciting moments. The cheering, the laughter and for many, the tears as they access old memories is gratifying.

Technology has given us significantly faster and immediate access to the outside world. For those seniors who have participated and graduated from our computer and technology classes, we congratulate you for extending your knowledge and welcoming the technological language of the younger generation. You, too, now have open access to this ever-changing global phenomenon!

For those interested in information about upcoming computer and technology classes, please contact your Family Centers' Resident Service Coordinator and express your interest. We want to hear from you so that we can schedule more classes at a site convenient for you.