



Liberty Community Services



Fall 2007

News Briefs

- A twentieth anniversary reception on October 18 celebrated the unique support of organizations and people who contributed to Liberty's two decades of success. Event honorees included sponsor United Illuminating, founding members Reverend Monroe Wright and Jill Strawn, Board Member Michael Merson, MD and former Executive Director David Mensah.
- The fascinating and touching nonfiction book "Dinner at Six: Voices from the Soup Kitchen," by acclaimed author Helen Hudson is now available on our web site: www.libertycs.org

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Harry Chapin Tribute Concert in May

Liberty Presents New Haven's Tribute to Harry Chapin

Liberty Community Services is pleased to announce that New Haven's Second Annual Tribute to Harry Chapin will be on Friday, May 9, 2008 at the Shubert Theater. Liberty's first Harry Chapin Tribute event, featuring the Steve Chapin Band and the L.U.N.C.H. Ensemble, was a popular success that carried on the spirit of Harry Chapin, founder of World Hunger Year, and his legacy of music, community and support for those in need

As with the first event, which took place on June 1, the concert will highlight the music of Harry Chapin and feature the Steve Chapin Band, led by Harry's brother Steve, with original Harry Chapin Band members Big John Wallace and Howard Fields. They will again be joined by Connecticut folk balladeer Bill Pere and his L.U.N.C.H. Ensemble, which mobilizes talented young performers to help alleviate hunger and poverty through the

power of popular music.

Over 600 music enthusiasts, Chapin fans and supporters of Liberty's mission helped make the first Chapin tribute an overwhelming success—with moments of seriousness, emotion and humor—and great fun for everyone there.

Liberty's web site (www.libertycs.org) will have regular updates about the concert and ticket information.

A Note from Executive Director John Bradley



The other day I was talking to a New Haven police officer about a horrific event that occurred. Three youths assaulted a homeless man on New Haven Green in the middle of the afternoon on a lovely fall day. The assault was witnessed by a bystander who came forward to identify the youths, and they have been charged with the crime.

We don't want to believe that such things happen in our city and our country, but they do happen. In hearing the stories of people who have experienced homelessness, it's clear that life on the street is brutal and scary. One woman describing it said that in all the time she was homeless, she never experienced a single act of simple kindness – there was always a condition put on anything that was given.

After the police officer described the attack, he said to me "Thank God for Liberty Safe Haven". He said that because the people who live at Safe Haven are safe from the world of the street. The benefit of Safe Haven and the other programs that Liberty offers is not just to the person who is leaving homelessness, but to New Haven as a whole: to the police officers, who otherwise have to serve as social workers; to the hospitals, which otherwise provide routine care and crisis intervention; to the families, who will otherwise worry that their father, son or daughter will suffer on the streets, or end up lost to them forever, and to the citizens, who know their city is a safer, more humane place for all of us to live and work.

As Liberty Community Services celebrates its 20th anniversary, I am happy to say that I see an organization still driven to alleviate the suffering caused by homelessness. That's a benefit to us all, even if we could never imagine ourselves as the person who needs help.

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Computers and computer classes are available to participants of Liberty's Day Program (story on page 5)

State Helps Make Up Funding Reductions

In early 2007, the State of Connecticut was informed that its federal funding from the Ryan White Care Act, which provides money to agencies for services to people living with HIV/AIDS, would be significantly reduced. The federal cuts resulted from changes in the law on how persons with HIV/AIDS were counted. So while federal funding overall stayed even, Connecticut's share of the pool of funds fell by several million dollars. This reduction severely affected the services and housing that people living with HIV/AIDS received. In early 2007, local agencies began reducing services due to the reduced revenue.

The agencies that received these funds, and the clients that were assisted by the funds, lobbied federal and State legislators to restore the funding. During the Connecticut legislative session,

these pleas were heard, and the State agreed to appropriate money for the next two years. In the New Haven/Fairfield County area, that resulted in \$1.1 million in additional State funds to help make up for the federal reduction. Liberty received a share of these State funds, and we were able to restore service levels, even though funding is still not the same for us as it was before the federal reduction.

We are thankful to the Connecticut legislature and Governor Rell for recognizing the severity of the federal budget reduction and responding so quickly. We also would like to thank the people who spoke up and supported the efforts for restoring funding. It made a difference, and the makeup funding received from the State will make a real difference in many people's lives.

Remembering Others This Holiday Season

Liberty Wish List

Some clients come to Liberty with just the shirt on their back. Liberty provides clients with what they need to start over. Listed below are items that Liberty is always in need of. Anything you provide will help. Please bring or mail item to our office at 254 College Street, 2nd Floor, New Haven CT 06510.

Household Items: new blankets, new twin bed sheets, new pillows, new towels and wash cloths, kitchen towels, pots and pans, cleaning supplies, plates and bowls, can openers, cooking utensils, trash cans, laundry detergent, laundry baskets, dish soap, sponges

Personal Hygiene Items: washcloths, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, lotion, shaving cream, disposable razors, feminine pads, coats, sweat-shirts, socks, underwear (male and female—all sizes)

Program Supplies: art supplies, disposable cameras, easels, grocery store gift cards, books

Liberty's Garden Project Keeps Growing!

The Garden Project at Liberty Safe Haven began in the late spring of 2007. We were fortunate, with the help of the New Haven Land Trust, to rapidly locate a small plot of land on the grounds of the Winslow-Celentano Senior Housing complex, a facility managed by the Housing Authority of New Haven. This provided us with good soil to work on, and a partnership with another agency helping individuals and the New Haven community.

With the help of several Liberty staff and residents, the managers of the garden project, Grace Burson and Scott Clyburn, quickly prepared the soil, built box beds and planted seedlings and seeds. As the garden took shape, both Liberty Safe Haven and Winslow-Celentano residents came out and got involved in the work. It provided a way to get out into the fresh air, relax, and help with all the tasks that make a garden grow – planting, watering, weeding and harvesting.

The garden soon began to bear fruit. In mid-June, we enjoyed the first harvest of lettuce, which was followed by peas, zucchini, and tomatoes. Residents chose flowers to

plant for visual appeal, and garden project participants also planted flowers at other Liberty residential programs.

Over the course of the summer, events in the garden, such as a pizza party, picnic, ice cream social, and barbecue, brought residents out to the garden to see its progress and mingle with the folks from Winslow-Celentano.

In July, we began to hold cooking sessions, where residents were encouraged to cook with fresh, healthy ingredients, with the help of Liberty Safe Haven's Life Skills Manager Cindy Mercier. In alternating weeks at Safe Haven and Liberty's Transitional Living Program, we used fresh vegetables and herbs harvested from the garden to create dishes like pesto, zucchini fritters, spaghetti sauce, tacos, eggplant parmesan, quiche, stew, salade nicoise, and tortilla soup. Residents and staff enjoyed cooking together and learning about and sharing all the tasty things one can do with veggies.

The garden season ended on a high note with a



A summer 's day at Liberty's community garden.

Harvest Dinner on October 11, featuring a roast turkey with all the trimmings – many of them straight from the garden. Cabbage, greens, squash, beans, onions, herbs, and carrots added to the diversity of the feast everyone enjoyed, with gratitude to the Safe Haven residents who had worked on the garden throughout the season.

Plans for the Future

Liberty is grateful to have received permission from the New Haven Department of Parks to use a site within their system for the 2008 growing season. This will provide a larger garden area for an expanded garden and increased

participation and activities throughout the season.

Executive Director John Bradley and Grace Burson have been researching ways that the garden could become an integral part of Liberty's programs for the future, including giving consumers experience and skills that would help with future employment. These and other ideas are being explored, along with implementation methods used by different agencies, both locally and nationwide. Research into funding possibilities and grants is ongoing as plans for Liberty's garden program, and its many benefits to the entire community, continue to grow.

Leaders Honored at Liberty's 20th Anniversary

Liberty Community Services celebrated two decades of service to the community with an anniversary reception and awards ceremony on October 18. About 120 friends of the agency, and others who have been part of Liberty's history, joined in honoring four long-time supporters who significantly contributed to Liberty's successful mission of providing housing and services to those in need.

Honored at the event were: Reverend Monroe Wright and Jill Strawn, David Mensah and Michael Merson, M.D.

Reverend Wright and Jill Strawn were community leaders who led the response to the housing crisis faced by individuals confronting HIV/AIDS in the 1980s. Their work led to the founding of the Connecticut AIDS Residence Program (CARP), which later changed its name to Liberty Community Services to reflect the broadening of its programs to serve individuals facing homelessness, mental illness, addiction and chronic illness.

In addition to his role in the founding of CARP, Reverend Wright has dedicated a lifetime to improving the lives of countless individuals and communities. He volunteered at hospices, advised several supportive housing organizations, organized a peacemaking program for children from Northern Ireland to visit the U.S., and founded a group to promote justice and peace in Israel and Palestine. Reverend Wright serves as the pastor at the Lanham United Methodist Church, in Maryland.

As an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), Jill Strawn was one of the first in our community to recognize the potential impact of HIV/AIDS when she came into contact with some of the region's earliest cases. In addition to her role in the founding of CARP, and serving as the agency's Vice President for six years, Jill was a founding member of AIDS Project New Haven, created and ran the state's first HIV counseling and testing site, served on the Mayor's Task Force on HIV/AIDS, the Governor's Task Force on AIDS Policy and Research, the Connecticut Hospital Association HIV Task Force, and currently teaches nursing at Southern Connecticut State University.



Liberty Community Services founding members and event honorees Reverend Monroe Wright and Jill Strawn

David Mensah was the agency's Executive Director during a period when Liberty expanded its services and laid the groundwork for the opening of Liberty Safe Haven, an innovative program serving chronically homeless adults. David's commitment and tireless advocacy helped make Liberty Safe Haven, with its many benefits to individuals and the community, a reality. David has since served as the Executive Director of the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York and currently manages Wave Training and Consulting.

Dr. Michael Merson's professional work in public health has affected the lives of thousands of individuals and communities. The most prominent of his many achievements include serving as Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Programme on AIDS, and Dean of the Yale University Department of Epidemiology and Public Health. His personal commitment to public health on a local scale was reflected in the inspiration and guidance he shared with Liberty during his seven years of visionary leadership on the Board of Directors.

In marking its second decade of providing life-saving housing and services to the community, Liberty acknowledges the enormous debt of gratitude owed to the honorees, along with many other leaders and supporters who have made Liberty's mission possible.

New Day Program Offers Unique Services

Liberty Community Services has opened a new day program and computer center dedicated to serving individuals facing homelessness, chronic illness or mental illness, and already the benefits of having of a place to spend the day, gain access to important services and learn vocational skills is benefiting many people's lives.

"The goal of Liberty, and of other housing providers in New Haven, is to eliminate homelessness, but unfortunately we are not at that point. Until housing becomes available, we are offering a safe place during the day and access to services that will hopefully translate into success when permanent housing is identified," says John Bradley, Executive Director of Liberty Community Services. "Sometimes, just knowing that a place like Liberty is there for them makes all the difference."

The program, which is located at Liberty Safe Haven, fills a critical need for many people in our community. Most importantly, it offers an array of services that are vital to individuals confronting homelessness, including laundry room access, help with job searches, counseling, referral to community resources, use of shower/bath facilities, support groups, clothing, transportation to health appointments, and phone use. A community room is also available, with television, a library, meals and coffee.

But the program offers much more. There is an on-site computer center, with classes for all levels of experience. Users are taught an array of computer skills, both for personal use and to give

them knowledge and experience that will help them in today's job market. In addition to phone use, individual voicemail accounts are being established, so that participants can make appointments, schedule job interviews, or keep in touch with family.

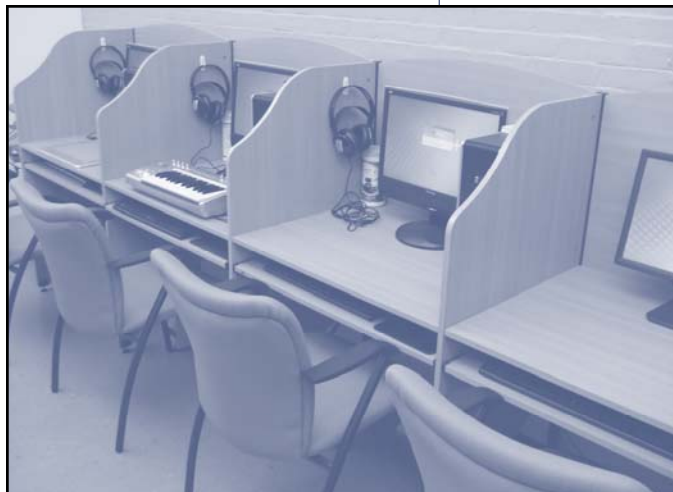
"We are offering a unique set of services," says Khelen Rhodes, Coordinator of the Liberty Day Program. "These are services that really make a difference. Many jobs now require online applications, even for collecting carts at the grocery store. And phone access and voice mail are critical, because you can't get a job or make a doctor's appointment if you can't be reached by phone."

Spaces at Liberty's Day Program are limited, and may be accessed Tuesdays through Fridays on a first-come basis by those who are registered participants. For information or to register, contact Khelen Rhodes, Day Program Coordinator, at (203) 497-2302.



Liberty Safe Haven, the site of Liberty's new Day Program.

*"When you're out there and you don't know which way to go, which way to turn, then just getting into Liberty and having a roof over your head—having a base—gives you security."
- Liberty Client*



Computer Center at the Liberty Day Program



Liberty Community

Services, Inc.

254 College Street

Second Floor

New Haven, CT 06510

About Us

For two decades, Liberty Community Services has offered a new beginning to individuals in our community facing homelessness, addiction or chronic illness by providing a stable place to live with supportive services that foster physical and psychological health.

Using a model called supportive housing, Liberty addresses the causes of homelessness in a way that has proven successful in helping individuals make a permanent transition away from life on the streets. For those who have had setbacks or are experiencing homelessness, this combination of stability and care can bring about life-saving changes.

Liberty Community Services is proud to be a part of the successes of those we serve, supporting the community we share, one individual at a time.

From temporary programs that help individuals make the transition off the streets, to permanent apartments in the landmark Liberty Safe Haven building, Liberty offers an array of programs and services that give individuals the support they need to foster permanent change.

For more information about our programs, staff, events, and anything else Liberty, please visit our website:

www.libertycs.org