

Volunteer of the Month: Jennifer Fournier-Dubree

I first met Jennifer one morning in September when I looked out my kitchen window to see half a dozen maroon and blue Hartford T-shirts working in the dirt in front of the Boys & Girls Club. After asking for information I was directed to Jennifer Fournier-Dubree, the Team lead only to discover that there were another dozen or more Hartford volunteers inside helping out all over the building. I asked if I could get more information for an article in the News & Views and after permissions were secured we sat down for an interview.

It turns out that Jennifer and her team are not the only volunteers from The Hartford helping out in Asylum Hill and beyond, but I'm pretty sure she's high on the list of the most dedicated. On that same day there were other groups helping out at West Middle School and Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen as well. But for now we'll try to tell Jennifer's story.

Jennifer began at The Hartford 25 years ago, in Southington, and worked in a number of positions before coming to the main office in 2007.

It was a big move coming to the city; "I was a change manager, but I'm not very good at change, which is why they hired me." Jennifer said, "but when I got here I heard from my peers about the Boys & Girls Club and Math Buddies at West Middle School...and because my children were growing up I had more time for myself." And so it started.

She's always been a people person and always looking to grow both professionally and personally.

After a little while volunteer team leadership opportunities opened up, first at the Boys & Girls Club and then at Loaves & Fishes and the West Middle School Math Buddies program. She now is the team leader for all three "and that's enough" Jen said.

That doing this volunteer work can become a part of your identity was made obvious when Jen said the previous reading and math buddies leader Terry Tracz who began the program in '94 retired from The Hartford to go back to school to so she could become a teacher in the Hartford Schools, and she still comes back to volunteer. "And as for me, when I'm done with The Hartford journey, I'm hoping to move on to something in the philanthropic realm" Jennifer said.

When I asked about the change in culture at The Hartford regarding volunteering when Liam McGee came Jennifer began with "I miss that man... you would see him in the halls and he would know your name, he would get his lunch in the cafeteria..."

In 2014 at the Boys & Girls Club cleanup, Liam was part of Jennifer's team. When the interview was over, we spent another 20 minutes tracking down the recently completed oil portrait of Liam so I could get a photo of it. I got them both.

We in the neighborhood don't often know what happens inside The Hartford campus, it's a world very different from that of most of the residents. It would be great to get to know more of the people there. Photos of the crews and their activities are at <https://goo.gl/photos/X4f4y7By9EzWHC1y6>

