

## Volunteer of the Month – E talks at Grace

This is one of those stories that could fit into several different columns, but it feels like it fits best here.



Louisa Barton Duguay is one of those people who's always on the lookout for ways to make things better in the neighborhood, usually by making connections between people with a need for opportunities, and opportunities looking for people. One of the habits she's developed to stay engaged is to watch TED talks on her laptop. She also noticed that while many of the people she runs into in the neighborhood are reasonably thoughtful, they often just end up talking about one another. By last October, she devised a plan to help them talk about something a little more challenging, like TED talks.

Get 10 to 15 people into a room, have them watch a 15 minute talk and then discuss it. Better yet, get one of them each week to choose the talks and lead the discussion. But just to make sure it got off the ground, she decided that a \$50.00 stipend might motivate volunteers to choose the talks and lead the discussion, and a book of 5 bus passes for attending 5 of these "E-Talks" might bring in the curious discussion group.

She pitched the idea to Urban Alliance in East Hartford, and while they didn't have a category for this sort of thing, they liked it enough to fund a trial run.

So Wednesday February 19<sup>th</sup> was the 6<sup>th</sup> Wednesday afternoon in a row that people have shown up for the event, each time with a few more than the week before. Sue Carey has been her partner in this endeavour, and between them they hosted the first few. Since then, the example and the stipend have been enough to keep it going. The next four weeks are already planned.

Some of the interesting TED Talks that were viewed and discussed included "Jia Jiang: What I learned from 100 days of rejection" and "Maysoon Zayid: I got 99 problems ... palsy is just one"

Most recently Suzie Jenkins chose the two talks that were viewed, and led the discussion.

As someone who is naturally quite shy and avoids the spotlight, putting herself in the front of the room was a challenge. So in the end, when she was met with enthusiastic applause, it all proved worthwhile.

TED Talks are available at <https://www.ted.com/talks>