

Grand Opening of the AH Multicultural Resource Corner

On the Thursday evening of January 26th, more than 50 people came to celebrate the opening of the long awaited Asylum Hill Multicultural Resource Corner at 60 Gillett St. State Representative and House Majority Leader Matt Ritter came to cut the ribbon, and share a few words. Jennifer

Cassidy,

former chair of both AHNA and co-chair of the Welcoming Committee, as well as champion of the effort spoke as did Georges Annan-Kingsley and Moureen Bish AHNA board member and Director of the Catholic Charities Asylum Hill Family Center. Also speaking were Robert Muro Catholic Charities Chief Operating Officer, and Kimberly May-Bailey Director of Migration, Refugee and Immigration Services of Catholic Charities.



The corner is located in a small office at the Catholic Charities Asylum Hill Family Center at 60 Gillett St. It is just the right size for a UCONN School of Social Work intern and a member of the community in need of help to meet and talk about a problem.

In the summer of 2013 a unique collaboration was forged between AHNA and Hartford Public Library to offer increased support to Asylum Hill newcomers. In 2014 the Welcoming Committee was officially approved as an AHNA sub-committee. The Welcoming Committee reached out to welcome new arrival immigrant and refugee families living in Asylum Hill as nearly 30% of the residents are foreign born.

One of the major unmet needs identified early on was a lack of designated meeting space for residents to come together to share and participate in civic, social and cultural activities. In response, the Library applied for a grant from Welcoming America to conduct focus groups aided by interpreters to learn what residents wanted in a multicultural center.

In June of 2015 a Multicultural Center Steering Committee was formed to pursue the dream of an Asylum Hill Multicultural Center. It became evident after several months that this would be multi-year endeavor requiring major fund raising, broad municipal support, and the expertise of many. The Steering Committee decided that a component of the Multicultural Center plan should be launched in the interim to help address immediate, basic human needs related to health, education and human services. A similar service had been successfully provided at the Downtown Branch of the Hartford Public Library. This was going to be housed at the Mark Twain Branch Library until hours were suddenly reduced due to budget constraints. The problem of staffing was solved on the same day

that the location was decided thanks to a commitment from the UCONN School of Social Work to provide a continuous supply of interns for the 3 hour per week opening.^[5] Now the long awaited Multicultural Resource Corner is a reality, and the name means what it says, no matter what your culture or how long your family has been here, if you have a problem, give them a try. The Corner will also provide Basic English Classes. For more information, call 860-278-9398.

For photos of the Grand Opening go to <https://goo.gl/photos/pZAvkjrvsDktxQLk6>