

Volunteer of the Month Louisa Barton-Duguay

How Louisa ended up moving from Moncton NB Canada where she was a working sculptor to Hartford CT where she was prohibited from getting a job, is much longer than we have space to tell. The short version that she prefers is that it was the grace of God that made her move here in 2010. Since then she has gone from being a working artist who was involved in social justice and environmental volunteer work, to a full time volunteer who finds time to create a little art when the situation warrants it.

She came to Hartford and Grace Lutheran Church when her friend of a friend introduced her to Rev. Eva Steege then the pastor at Grace. They got along so well they decided to get her to move here, but even Canadians have to deal with US immigration laws, So Louisa applied for and received an artist visa that lasted 2 years. When that began to expire she applied for and received religious worker status, which she currently holds. All this is to say, she has had lots of time to do volunteer work, and she's made good use of it. Much of her time originally was spent

gardening at the church, which led to a gardening sub-committee at AHNA as well as participation in the Education and the Welcoming Committees. But it was the gardening that caused her to notice the number of people walking by who just had nowhere to sit that sparked the idea of building benches. Today that idea is the Fresh Start Pallet Project LLC and Louisa is one of the many volunteer board members. She is also the lead artist when anyone wants the furniture custom painted.

But the volunteer position that still occupies most of her time is the Friday Night Gathering at Grace that is going into its sixth year. She is the main liaison with Foodshare and usually is the head chef about once per month. And when she's not cooking she's at the registration desk greeting both the regulars and newcomers with a smile and whatever else they might need.

Though it isn't what she thought it would be when she left Moncton, her life here in Hartford has become increasingly comfortable trusting in Divine Providence even if it's not always physically comfortable. She wouldn't have it any other way. For more information on the Friday Night Gathering, stop by Grace Lutheran Church at 46 Woodland St any Friday evening beginning at 5:00pm. More information about the Fresh Start Pallet Project can be found at <http://www.freshstartpalletproducts.com>

