

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Launches “Building On Success” Program to Support Smaller Nonprofit Organizations

For nearly 20 years, the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association has served as the umbrella organization that empowers residents and supports connections and collaborations among all neighborhood stakeholders to improve the quality of life for Asylum Hill residents, workers, worshippers and stakeholders. The Association has worked closely with neighborhood business institutions like Aetna, The Hartford, Saint Francis Hospital and Asylum Hill Congregational Church as well as local policymakers on efforts to respond to various issues impacting residents and businesses alike.

Like many small nonprofit organizations that lack substantial funding sources, Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association relies upon just one part-time staff person and its dedicated board and volunteers to organize, promote and communicate key initiatives and issues of concern to residents and policymakers.

“While the Association has made great strides in supporting our residents in their efforts to advocate on behalf of themselves and their neighborhood, our lack of staff and reliable funding have always made this work extremely challenging,” said Yvonne Matthews, who serves as chair of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association’s board. “We are always looking for ways to improve our organizational leadership structure, better utilize our dedicated volunteers and maximize fundraising opportunities.”

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association will join 11 other small nonprofit organizations to participate in the Hartford Foundation’s Building on Success Program, a new two-year program designed to combine capacity building support and small grants to small nonprofits. Building on Success combines quarterly group learning sessions, individual organizational consultation, and grant support over a two-year period. Each organization that fully participates in the program will be awarded a total of \$10,000, over two years.

The 12 participating nonprofit organizations participating in the Building on Success Program are:

- Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (Hartford)
- Building Healthy Families (Manchester)
- Carter Cares, Inc. (South Windsor)
- Circle of Life (East Hartford)
- Community Accounting Aid & Services, Inc. (Rocky Hill)
- CT Alliance for Victims of Violence & their Families (Farmington)
- Hartford 2000, Inc. (Hartford)
- Hartford Artisans Weaving Center (Hartford)
- Hartford Gay Men's Chorus (Hartford)
- Ironwood Community Partners, Inc. (Bloomfield)
- Padres Abriendo Puertas, Inc. (Hartford)
- Vernon Community Arts Center (Vernon)

Of the 2,760 public charities operating in Greater Hartford, approximately 480, like those participating in this program, have annual revenues below \$200,000. Because of their modest size and structure, obtaining financial support from government and philanthropic funders can be incredibly difficult. In response to this situation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving spent a year doing extensive research on how Greater Hartford’s community foundation could provide support for these modest, but vital community nonprofit organizations. It was determined that small organizations need support in the areas of financial

stability and operating support; leadership, governance and organizational development; assessment, planning and evaluation; collaboration, as well as community and volunteer engagement.

“The Foundation has long struggled with the question of expanding support for small nonprofit organizations and, while no definitive answer or approach was established, the question persisted in the form of ongoing requests from small agencies and feedback,” said Linda J. Kelly, president of the Hartford Foundation. “The Building on Success Program will support under-served organizations by strengthening their capacity to better serve the community and help them build a track-record with the Foundation while strengthening the Foundation’s own relationships at the neighborhood level. This is an example of one of the Hartford Foundation’s strategic focus on strengthening the region’s nonprofit sector by initiating new and innovative programming for developing organizations.”

The Building on Success program is a program tailored to meet the needs of small nonprofit organizations that have limited knowledge of and access to capacity building resources. The program’s goals are to: assist participating organizations in understanding current capabilities and areas for future development; strengthen areas of greatest need; learn and apply information about important nonprofit management functions; develop a strategic plan; and fund mission related projects.

Each organization will be assigned an organizational consultant at the onset of the program. Initially, the consultant and each participating organization will complete an organizational assessment. This organizational assessment will be the basis of future work with the consultant.