

## Exploring AH – AH Family Center

By Bernie Michel

The Asylum Hill Family Center recently moved from its long-time location at 60 Gillett St to the Catholic Charities building at 896 Asylum Ave. It seemed like a good time to find out how the move might affect this long-standing partner in the neighborhood, and also get an update on what they are doing.

To do this I reached out to Janine McMahon, Family Support Specialist, and a resident of Asylum Hill. She graciously invited me in to their new office, and introduced me to several of her associates including Norman Goldston, a Youth Development Coach, Luis Santiago, Community Health Worker for the 360 Wellness Program; Katie Bond, NFN Clinical Supervisor. John Noonan Director of Development and Communications for Catholic Charities was also there. Each of them explained their title and described the services that they provide or oversee to the community.

The first story that was told to me was the best in the sense that Janine herself came to the Family Center as a client. She had moved to Hartford from New York to move back in with her mother, and at her mother's recommendation went to the Family Center looking for help. She enrolled in several of the programs and experienced the benefits of each.

After a while, Miss Moureen Bish, then the Executive Director of the Family Center, suggested she apply for an opening as a staff member of the Family Center. She did and was hired. Even after being employed there she has continued to take various trainings offered and continues to improve her skills and effectiveness both as a Family Support Specialist and as an example of the effectiveness of the programs to improve lives.

To list and explain all of the programs available would be beyond the capacity of this article. There are programs as simple as Dinner and a Story, fundamentally a literacy program that provides a group family meal and then a story read to the children and parents followed by a discussion about the story. This weekly event encourages both the family meal, as well as appreciation for reading.

Another important program is the partnership with St. Francis Hospital in the 360 Wellness program. Staff at the hospital identify individuals who have living conditions that are affecting their health negatively and refer them to Luis, the Community Health Workers who works with them for 6 months to make the needed changes. This can include housing, utilities, medications, food security and quality, personal habits etc. Currently Luis is working with 10 clients.

It was at the last AHNA meeting that Janine and Keturah Kinch met one another. They are now planning to visit each other's programs to explain what each are doing and how they can collaborate.

For more information on the many other programs that are available go to  
<https://ccaoh.org/location/asylum-hill-family-center-60-gillett-st-hartford-ct/>

