

Town & County Club 5th Spring Forum

On Thursday afternoon, June 14, the Town & County Club hosted its fifth annual Spring Forum. In the past they have dealt with topics such as immigration and historic preservation.

This year the topic was *Investing in the People of Hartford: Building a Safer City Every Day*. To bring life to this subject they engaged Enid Ray, the new executive director of Our Piece of the Pie; Brian Foley, recently retired deputy chief of the Hartford Police Department; and Deborah Rogala, program operations director at Community Partners in Action. The moderator was Jay Williams, new president for Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.



Less Than a year ago, Enid Ray succeeded Bob Rath, who led OPP for decades while Ray served at Hartford Public Schools. Brian Foley retired from HPD after more than two decades and will be working for Fox 61 as chief investigator helping to tell Hartford's story.

The common thread in each of their opening remarks was the importance of investing in the more challenged members of society and especially our younger citizens while they are still forming habits. Enid highlighted the economic benefit of the nearly \$2 million annually that goes to the students and staff of OPP. It's money that largely stays here in Hartford, she said.

"These young people are not going on Florida vacations," Ray said.

The real impact, of course, is the benefit to Hartford and the state when they overcome their early trauma to become productive citizens, she explained.

Brian Foley spoke of HPD's broad effort over the last decade to become a police department that serves and engages the community. He reflected on the police shootings nationally and the responses of various other cities, notably Baltimore, as a cautionary tale, and credits the efforts of HPD and its approach as a reason Hartford has been spared the problems of other cities, large and small. Recently, when there was a shooting by a law enforcement officer (a DEA agent on Sigourney Street), the department immediately contacted its faith-based and community partners, "...and within an hour had them on the scene reviewing what happened." It was these trusted partners who were able to get the news out to the public before rumors had a chance to spread, he said.

Panelist Deb Rogala, who was just next door at Immanuel Congregational Church the previous Sunday (reviewed in another article), spoke about the importance of giving help where it is most needed rather than where we might think it is most deserved. She talked about the CPA's program of engaging those near the end of their sentence to begin their successful re-entry into society. Their work begins a month or more before release and continues for up to a year afterward.

The final participant was Robin Cullen, a member of the Judy Dworin Performance Project. Her dramatic, first-person telling of the stories of three inmates from the York Correctional Facility was riveting, and the perfect conclusion to the words of the three panelists. For more photos of the event go to: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Qma8tSC3ntT9KtWZ8>