

Why I Love Asylum Hill

By Bernie Michel

In the Sunday November 18th Hartford Courant Insight Section was an opinion piece written by Christopher Swift, the CEO of The Hartford, titled “Why I Love Hartford, City on the Move”. In it he speaks of all of the encouraging signs of progress in Hartford and the region and why it’s so important to continue the momentum, to sustain the progress. I couldn’t agree more. Earlier this year, AHNA celebrated our 20th Anniversary and The Hartford was a major partner in that celebration, in part by hosting it in their Tower suite. At that time we were able to look back at where we began and the path that both the neighborhood and AHNA have taken in those twenty years. A lot of progress has been achieved, and the momentum of that progress allows us to take on new challenges with greater strength and encouragement. The benefits are always twofold; problems get solved or at least diminished, and partnerships get formed or strengthened.

While my focus is mostly in Asylum Hill, I can’t help but notice how partners’ efforts beyond this neighborhood and even beyond this region and state contribute to our success, and not all of it seems to be planned. Events as near as the Know Good Market in Parkville and the recent Open Studio Hartford add energy to the whole region as well as to Asylum Hill. Both the Hungarian Ambassador’s visit to Hartford at the invitation of the World Affairs Council of CT, and the many immigrants and refugees brought to Connecticut and Hartford by Catholic Charities and IRIS contribute to the strengthening of our social fabric. Both the diversity that they bring and the coming together to welcome them, add to the richness of ideas and customs here.

In his article, Mr. Swift lists The Mark Twain House & Museum, and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center as examples of venerable institutions, and they are. But I’m more heartened by the recent progress of both in expanding their programs and partnerships, intent on having an even greater impact on both their neighborhood and the entire region as each of their namesakes did in their lives.

He also singles out The Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, and announces The Hartford’s commitment to build a new club in the South End of Hartford. I can certainly attest to the benefits to youth and families of having a Boys & Girls Club in the neighborhood. I have seen first hand life before and after.

So if somehow you did not see Mr. Swift’s piece in the Courant, you can find it at <https://www.courant.com/opinion/insight/hc-op-insight-why-i-love-hartford-20181112-story.html> It is well worth reading more than once.