

Exploring Asylum Hill: S. Marshall St Pop-Up

Several times each year a group of individuals from the organization called the S. Marshall Interfaith Coalition get together on a Saturday afternoon and set up a few tables for a few hours in front of the Marshall House playground just to meet and talk to the residents and to get to know them. This usually involves bringing something to offer to those living here and at this time of year, cider and donuts were the main draw, and the Village for Families & Children also came with a table to register people to vote. Pumpkins, houseplants and children's books rounded out the items given out.



The Coalition has done this enough times at various times of year including at the annual block party each summer to see what items are most popular and the plants always run out first. This year pumpkins were second, and maybe because there were so many available, books were the only thing remaining at the end of the two-hour event. There were definitely more books being carried home than donuts eaten.

The efforts of this small but dedicated organization to take on the historically most challenged street in Asylum Hill with approximately 300 children living on this one block from Farmington to Hawthorn Street have met with some success, including addressing safety issues and attracting significant corporate and non-profit support for the blockparty which serves to raise neighborhood organizational awareness about the challenges the residents face. . The play by Hartbeat Ensemble **Meet us Where We Are** earlier this year raised additional awareness. The Coalition has also been working to create a community playground for the many children as a response to concerns expressed by many of the residents. The Coalition of volunteers is also seeking a skilled organizer who is able to dedicate the time to listen and work with the residents to make a real difference on S. Marshall.

Children laughing, choosing pumpkins, filling bags with books – it's all good. Maybe if this could happen every Saturday...

For more photos of the event go to <https://goo.gl/photos/z2iDdkuvuDu2kzDM9> to be involved in the Coalition contact Immanuel Congregational Church at (860) 527-8121