



THIRD AGE INITIATIVE TEAM PROJECTS

Like other Leadership Greater Hartford programs, the Third Age Initiative is a dynamic learning experience highlighted by community action projects carried out by teams over the course of a year or more. The emphasis of this program is to develop and engage Greater Hartford's older adults as policy makers, change agents, program developers and project managers in the vast array of organizations and agencies that would benefit from their wisdom, insight and experience.

The program begins with six weekly daylong workshops followed by a two-day retreat. During the workshops, class members assess their leadership skills and abilities. Training exercises and discussions build on those capacities, particularly in non-hierarchical participative group settings. Several of the workshops include Hartford Encounters, tours in Greater Hartford so that participants can learn first hand about the issues and needs of the community and meet community leaders who are making a difference. At the retreat, the class members form teams to research issues and later develop projects that will address some of the community needs showcased earlier. They work on these projects in self-directed teams while they continue to develop their expertise and perspectives. Graduation is one year after the program begins. As noted below, many of the teams choose to continue their work with their projects even after graduation. LGH assists graduates in finding community leadership roles.

Common Sense Curriculum (Class 1)

This team's mission was to create, develop and implement a curriculum to teach young adults a common sense approach to life that reflects the collective wisdom of this task force. They piloted the program as part of the rehabilitation of youth referred to the Hartford Community Court in the fall of 2002 and again in the spring of 2003. The program has now been institutionalized as part of the court's restorative justice program with "Men in Recovery," an organization of Hartford men, serving as the mentors/teachers.

History and Heritage through the Arts (Class 1)

This team's mission was to encourage elementary school children to use the arts to express what they learn about their own history and heritage. During the 2002-2003 school year, they piloted the program at the University of Hartford Magnet School and exhibited the children's work at the Peoples Bank branch in downtown Hartford. The program expanded during the 2003-2004 school year with parents and team members involved actively in the learning projects the youngsters undertook. Although they are no longer involved with the Magnet School, this team worked together in 2006 to organize and manage the Dine-around Hartford event for 400 participants of the Community Leadership Association conference.

Agency Strengthening/Volunteer Matching (Class 1)

This team's mission was to empower individuals to make a positive difference in Hartford by adding personal interaction to the recruitment, training and placement of volunteers with non-profit agencies. They researched the effectiveness of the volunteer matching system in place at the United Way and recommended changes to enhance the placement of volunteers. They also piloted some new approaches with Our Piece of the Pie, a youth development organization, and Clark School Family Resource Center. Several members of the team continue their work with these two organizations.

Enhancing Perspectives of Hartford (Class 1)

This team wanted to improve the image and perception of Hartford. They planned and implemented a bus tour of some of Hartford's Hidden Treasures—focusing on outstanding specimen trees at the Institute for Living and Cedar Hill Cemetery. About 200 people participated in the first tour in May 2002. The Knox Parks Foundation ran this tour semi-annually for several years and a number of team members continued their involvement.

Opening Doors for Children (Class 2)

This team developed a project called “Readers as Leaders,” which was piloted during the 2002-2003 academic year and expanded in 2003-2004. Middle school youngsters were recruited and trained to be readers to children in kindergarten and first grade. They also received leadership training. Everybody Wins! CT, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the literacy of children, has now incorporated “Readers as Leaders” into its programs, with several team members serving on the board of Everybody Wins! CT. During the first three years of the project, the team generated a total of more than \$150,000 to support the project, including a grant from the CT Department of Education during the third year. The program is now conducted in numerous schools in Hartford and in New Britain.

Strengthening Families (Class 2)

This team formed to strengthen the family unit, specifically through parent education. They developed a resource center for Friends of the Family, a program of the Village for Families and Children that supports teenaged parents. The resource center includes parenting resources (books and tapes) as well as children’s books.

Onward Hartford (Class 2)

This team’s goal was to enhance Hartford’s neighborhoods. They had planned to develop programming to draw families from Hartford’s neighborhoods to the temporary ice skating rink in Bushnell Park. Plans for building the rink for the 2002-3 winter season did not materialize, so this team’s project was put on hold. Partly as a result of the success of the temporary rink established in 2001-2002, at least three permanent rinks are under consideration in Hartford. If any are built, this team may reconstitute itself to implement its plans.

The Neighborhood Gang (Class 3)

This team wanted to enhance the quality of life in Hartford’s neighborhoods. They identified the Julio Lozada Park, a small park in Clay Hill, one of North Hartford’s neighborhoods, in need of complete refurbishing. Initial fundraising generated funding for landscape architects to design the refurbished park. Working with city officials, neighborhood groups and the Latino Firefighters and with the guidance of state Senator John Fonfara, the team applied for and received \$350,000 in state bond funds to support the development of the park. Integral to their proposal are plans to ensure the on-going involvement of residents in the neighborhood to the upkeep and positive uses for the park. Ground breaking took place in May, 2009, and the ribbon cutting on the completed park was in November, 2009.

Rising Stars (Class 4)

This team organized around their common interests in positive youth development. They hoped to develop a curriculum module on communication skills for city youth involved with Our Piece of the Pie. While their plan never materialized, team members reported they learned much about group process and about themselves that will serve them well.

Voter Education (Class 4)

Working with Bulkeley High School, this team piloted a national program, Freedom’s Answer, locally. Freedom’s Answer involves youth to encourage greater awareness and participation in civic responsibility and voting.

Boomerangs (Class 5)

Initially formed to broaden and enhance the visibility and support for the Third Age Initiative, this team organized and hosted a full-day conference on June 21, 2004. Approximately 150 older adults came to explore the question, "What's Next? Your Future, Your Way."

Campaign Against Poverty (Class 5)

This team developed two video presentations for Community Access Cable to dispel some of the myths about poverty, especially homelessness. Team members wrote and produced two documentaries.

Literacy (Class 5)

This team decided to work to raise visibility and funds for Everybody Wins! CT!, an organization dedicated to enhancing the literacy of children. They coordinated a "Power Breakfast" where corporate representatives were invited to learn about the "Power Lunch" program and become involved as sponsors and volunteers.

HATS (Hartford Assets and Treasure Seekers) (Class 6)

This team wanted to cultivate an awareness of and encourage the public's appreciation of Hartford's diverse and unique assets. They decided to work with Riverfront Recapture, the organization that has redeveloped Hartford's riverfront, manages the parks on the east and west banks and runs numerous events on the riverfront. The team assisted them in marketing, needs assessment and program development in conjunction with their 25th anniversary.

SEED (Seniors Engaged in Environmental Development) (Class 6)

This team began their journey exploring ways to beautify the city. They partnered with several community groups to enhance and beautify Barnard Park (South Green neighborhood) and an area in Upper Albany. Fall planting was completed and additional work was done in the spring. A comic book aimed at raising the awareness of young people about litter and blight was being developed, but the team was unsuccessful in securing funding to support its publication.

Citizens in Action (Class 6)

This team was committed to improving services and programs for senior citizens specifically in the Frog Hollow neighborhood, where most of the team members lived. Working with the city, the Catholic Family Services, and the staff of the Spanish American Senior Center, they identified several specific ways to improve the services at the Center. They also generated new programming, including recreational days at Pope Park and computer training services for the members.

History and Culture (Class 6)

This team wanted to use the city's historical and cultural attractions to enrich the classroom experience of city youngsters. Having met with directors of most of the more well known sites (e.g. The Mark Twain House and Museum, the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, etc.), they partnered with the Hartford Board of Education and the faculty and staff of the Parkville School to develop a pilot project that introduced children to the historical sites in the city and the region. Funding supported three field trips for the children to major venues in the city.

Mentoring Needs (Class 7)

This team was motivated to increase the opportunities for children in Hartford to have positive mentors. They designed a mentoring program matching high school students at Weaver High School with third graders at Mark Twain School. They piloted the program in collaboration with Nutmeg Big Brothers and Sisters and that organization planned to sustain and grow the program.

Neighborhood Leadership (Class 7)

This team piloted a program modeled after a successful one in Kansas City. They recruited a team of neighborhood residents who received leadership training and developed their own leadership project to benefit families and enhance the quality of life in their neighborhood. They held a successful Free Dental Clinic. The Third Age Initiative team continued support and coaching of the neighborhood team throughout the implementation of their project.

Hartford and the Suburbs (Class 7)

The mission of this team was to improve understanding and perceptions that will benefit the people of the Greater Hartford region. The team wanted to bring suburban and urban residents together to enjoy various festivals and events held in Hartford's neighborhoods and the surrounding towns with the goal of participants coming to know each other and their communities and continue the relationships that form during the program. They identified one Saturday when a number of festivals and events were held in Hartford, provided shuttle bus service between them and promoted the day to various suburban groups.

The Hunger Team (Class 8)

This team was concerned with the broad issue of hunger. Having explored the causes of food insecurity and the programs that are currently operating to address the issue, the team decided to collaborate with Food Share and End Hunger CT in their efforts to increase the participation of eligible people in the food stamp program. The project involved members in eligibility screening and application assistance, and based on their experience, they developed a training manual for volunteers to continue that work and designed a system for recruiting volunteers. Foodshare has continued the implementation of the volunteer recruitment, training and volunteer led "clinics" to assist applicants in the process with outstanding results.

Children's Right Start (Class 8)

This team came together motivated to be involved with helping young children get the right start. They researched ways in which organizations in the community are addressing this need and decided to work with the Women's League Child Development Center in Hartford. Members received training in early literacy and then worked with the children at the center. The success of this program served as a model for a later LGH Quest team to develop a program of volunteer "Book Buddies" who regularly read to the children at the Women's League.

The Money Makers (Class 8)

This team sought to generate funding to support the work of other teams in the Third Age Initiative. Through the sale of Entertainment Books, the team raised more than \$2000 to support projects of future Third Age Initiative classes.

Wheels of Learning (Class 9)

Working with My Sister's Place Transitional Housing, this team developed a tutoring and academic enrichment program for the children who live in the facility. The program was piloted during the 2009-2010 school year with the goal of replication in other sites in the future. Volunteer tutors included college students preparing to become teachers and retired teachers, all of whom provide one-on-one individual support to the children living at My Sister's Place.

Keney Park Trailblazers (Class 9)

With a long-term vision of restoring Keney Park to its former state of glory as a lively community jewel, this team is beginning that work by seeking to restore the historic walking trails in the park. Using a map from the early 1900s, the team began the work of clearing, restoring and marking a trail as a nature trail that can be incorporated in the curriculum of Hartford schoolchildren.

Hartford Herit age3 (Class 9)

This team's mission was to inspire a broad understanding of the people, places and things that shape the culture of Hartford. They recorded the stories and voices of Hartford immigrants who have settled in Hartford since 1950. These histories have been archived at the Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library and will be available on their web site and as a traveling exhibit. The "Immigrant Faces and Voices that shape Hartford" exhibit and histories will become an important part of an ongoing process of documenting Hartford's history as a rich, multicultural city.

Urban Landscapes (Class 10)

This team is interested in improving Hartford's urban landscape by making parks and other public spaces more attractive and accessible to Hartford's residents. After discovering that the City had received a grant to create a public camping ground and hiking trails in Batterson Park, the team created a partnership with the Student Conservation Association to provide summer employment to city youth who would be engaged in this work. In addition, they have laid the foundation to create multi-generational gardens on the grounds of Shepherd Park that will bring the elderly residents there together with children from the neighborhood raising vegetables for all to enjoy.

History and Culture (Class 10)

Working with the History Center at the Hartford Public Library, this team is gathering oral histories from residents of Hartford to be incorporated in an exhibit of historical photographs of the city. The residents are being interviewed about their special places in Hartford; photos of the resident and their special place will be a part of the exhibit.

Team Mentor (Class 10)

Inspired by the extensive community building at Billings Forge, this team has partnered with Billings Forge Community Works to develop a mentoring program for middle school youth who live there to encourage and support them in pursuing higher education. They are exploring a variety of elements to include in the program ranging from providing information to families about higher education to taking the youngsters on college tours to expand their horizons.