

Testimonial To Honor CCA Executive Director

It was the year George Herbert Walker Bush was elected president; the year a terrorist bomb brought down Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland; the year "Phantom of the Opera" opened on Broadway, and when Russian troops began pulling out of Afghanistan. Finally, it was a year when gasoline was selling for an average \$.91 a gallon.

The year was 1988 and on Dec 1st in New Haven, Christian Community Action was welcoming its new executive director: the Rev. Bonita Grubbs.

On October 16th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Anthony's Ocean View Restaurant on Lighthouse Road, a reception will be held to honor Rev. Grubbs and her 20 years of service to CCA and the people the agency serves. Among those scheduled to speak are Yale Divinity School Dean Harold W. Attridge; Rabbi Herbert Brockman of

Congregation Mishkan Israel of Hamden; New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, Shelley Geballe, president and co-founder of the public policy advocacy group Connecticut Voices for Children and, via video, Bishop Peter Rosazza, auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Hartford.

"Bonita is only the fourth executive director CCA has ever had, but we have been extremely fortunate and blessed to have her at the helm for the past 20 years," noted John W. James, CCA Board President. "Hallmarks of her tenure include the opening of our Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program in 1998, the creation of our LifeWorks Center, the home to our advocacy and education efforts, in 2002 and more recently, the launching of our Program for Internships, Vocational Opportunities and Training (PIVOT) in 2005."

Tickets for the reception are \$45, with \$20 of that amount going towards a new "Morning Star Fund" that is being established in Rev. Grubbs' honor. The fund will help CCA create new programs to help families and individuals who are poor and homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, deal with the new challenges they may be facing in the future, including those related to crime, employment, the environment, education, finances, health care, housing and transportation.

Persons interested in receiving an invitation to the reception should send their names and addresses to the CCA Development Office via e-mail (amay@ccahelping.org) or phone (777-7848 x 112) by August 9th.

A portion of the ticket price is tax deductible and may be eligible for a match (see article on page 1).



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S U M M E R 2 0 0 8

Colleagues Bid Tearful Goodbye To Ms. Sofie

By Maria Garriga, Register Staff
(Reprinted with permission from The New Haven Register, March 21, 2008)

NEW HAVEN - When Sofie Nell Turner, 77, finally decided to retire from her job as a caseworker at Christian Community Action, her co-workers cried.

They held a retirement party for her Thursday at Casa Community Center on Sylvan Avenue.

Once a victim of domestic violence herself, Turner helped found the city's first agency to help domestic violence victims, raised six children of her own and 12 foster children and, for the past 20 years, worked as a case worker for homeless people at CCA's office on Sylvan Avenue.

At her retirement party, Turner cut a sleek figure in a stylish black pantsuit, ivory silk shirt, a scarlet and gold scarf and hoop earrings.

"It's been a pleasure. I love you all. My final words: I am blessed," she said.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell sent congratulations and the Board of Aldermen issued a citation read by Alderwoman Andrea Jackson-Brooks, D-4.

The Rev. Bonita Grubbs, CCA executive director, mournfully noted, "I knew this day would come (when) she would hang up her caseworker shoes."

As much as her clients depended on her, her co-workers depended on her even more.



THE END OF AN ERA—FELLOW CCA STAFF MEMBERS, LED BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REV. BONITA GRUBBS, LEFT, WISH COLLEAGUE SOFIE TURNER, CENTER, WELL UPON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE AGENCY

They called her "Ms. Sofie," but also referred to her as a legend, mother, big sister and mentor.

"She is the finest woman I have ever known," said John Revina, who has volunteered at the agency for 20 years.

Turner served on boards, tutored children, worked in community service and spent countless hours as a volunteer at Immanuel Baptist Church.

"One of the most important parts of being a woman, and being a strong black woman, is going to church. It keeps you grounded," she said.

Though retired, she plans to stay active in the church, community service and on the board of Home Inc., an agency that promotes affordable housing.

Turner grew up in Greenville, S.C. where she worked in cotton fields and drove the family tractor when her father fell ill. She moved to New Haven in her mid-20s to live with a sister and to leave a bad marriage behind.

The move shaped the course of her life. In New Haven, she worked factory jobs, reared children and joined the fight against domestic violence.

(continued on page 2)

Matching Funds Could Triple Your Donation's Value

Whether you have never made a donation to CCA before, or are one of our regular and faithful supporters, here is an exciting opportunity we hope you will consider.

Thanks to two new matching gifts that CCA has just received, both first-time donors to the agency and past donors will see the value of their gifts increase.

First time donors will see the total value of their gift triple, thanks to the double match. A \$50 contribution, for example, will be worth \$150 with the two matches.

A current donor who contributed \$150 in 2007 and increases that to \$250 by the end of

this year, to use another example, will see the \$100 increase matched twice, for a total value of \$300.

The limit on the matches is \$5,000, which means eligible gifts will be matched until the \$5,000 level is achieved.

These matching funds are being made possible, thanks to \$5,000 from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and another \$5,000 gift from a private individual.

If you have questions about this program or need to know what your giving level was for 2007 (and where you stand as of today), please call Al May, CCA Development

Director at (203) 777-7848 or send him an e-mail (Subject: Matching gift opportunity) at amay@ccahelping.org.

Please don't let this opportunity slip by to have your support earn extra dollars for CCA. Call for details (if you are a past donor) or (if you are a new donor) send in your donation today.

Have you received your 2008 Economic Stimulus check yet? If you have (or when you do), please consider donating part of it to CCA. If eligible under the matching grant rules, your donation value will increase.

(GRANTS continued from page 3)

of communication / recruitment, including one-on-one contacts, group meetings and having a presence at community events such as the Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Day observances, so as to build networks and connections for use later on. The goal will be to reach at least 400 parents and have at least 40 children placed in early childhood programs as a result of this effort.

Support (\$30,000) for CCA's Advocacy and Education Project's "No More Crumbs" campaign was awarded by the Connecticut Health Foundation. The campaign is designed highlight the need for the State Legislature to focus on real solutions to issues such as affordable health care and housing, good public transportation, a livable wage and reliable

child care services and not simply pass stop-gap measures that provide temporary answers.

CCA also recently was awarded a \$20,000 grant for its after-school program from the Carolyn Foundation of Minneapolis, MN and a \$4,748 grant from the (Episcopal) Bishop's Fund for Justice, to support CCA's neighborhood assistance programs, which includes its food pantry, its energy assistance registration, diaper distribution, notary and other services.

UPDATING YOUR
ESTATE PLANS?
PLEASE CONSIDER
A GIFT TO CCA
IN YOUR WILL.

Christian Community Action

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Rev. Bonita Grubbs

Director of Development / Editor
Albert May

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Rev. Bonita Grubbs

Grace and peace to you!

That is how a few people I know extend greetings. It is very biblical; most of the letters in the New Testament begin this way.

Not only is it melodious, it also is a message with meaning.

First, there's grace. In some situations, it is a blessing before a meal. In other situations, it is being in a favorable position or under heavenly protection without having done anything to get there.

I have seen such manifestation in the work that we undertake at Christian Community Action, and I wish that it would continue.

The individuals we serve are increasingly challenged because they have problems that prevent them from being productive citizens. As an agency, we are financially challenged. Although we have been fortunate enough to secure some private grants and some very generous individual gifts recently, it is clear the funds needed to provide services to those we serve are harder to come by these days than in previous years.

It has become increasingly more difficult to cover expenses and maintain our level of support to those who have few, if no options. They are homeless, without food,



without sufficient income and with limited hope. (We are not alone; most non-profit organizations are in the same situation.)

We could definitely use a dose of grace in monetary form, but not for us. We wish to extend grace to those we serve. They definitely deserve as large a dose as possible.

Second, there's peace. It is the type of peace that helps people to deal with the challenges of life. It is also the peace that passes all understanding, knowing that it can produce serenity, harmony and security

Within CCA, our focus is on offering peace by assisting people to secure basic needs. We know what these things are—housing, food, and clothing, a job that pays a decent wage, a good education and a feeling of self-worth, value and self-esteem—and we endeavor to support people in attaining them.

This is a tall order, but one to which we have been faithful for more than four decades. I have been a partner in this work for almost 20 years myself. (Yes, I will be marking two decades of ministry soon; more about this in another part of this newsletter). I never thought that I would stay that long.

It has been a good journey, though not always smooth. As John Newton said in the song Amazing Grace: “grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home,” and, for that, I am grateful. Peace is its partner, through the people we serve, the staff members we employ, our supporters, granting organizations, public officials and, of course, by God. They have sustained me and all of us CCA. I expect that they will continue to be with us for some time to come...in the name and spirit of grace and peace.

(SOPHIE continued from page1)

“Domestic violence was my passion. Nine times out of 10, if a woman is homeless, she is also a battered woman. She just doesn't correlate the two; she just says 'He slaps me around sometime,' or 'He just locks me out of the house sometimes.'”

Amy Eppler-Epstein, an attorney with New Haven Legal Services, recalls meeting Turner 25 years ago, as a student at Yale Law School. Eppler-Epstein volunteered in a project in which law students helped battered women get restraining orders. Turner helped train the students.

After 10 years, Turner left the domestic violence agency she helped start because, “it was time to leave.”

But she couldn't leave her needy clientele behind. In short order, she joined CCA as a case worker helping homeless families. Most people find such work emotionally draining; Turner was no exception.

“I don't think I could have done it so long if I wasn't grounded in my faith,” she said. “It takes too much out of you dealing with people who believe in nothing and no one. When you see a needy person, he or she needs support, not rescuing.”

Now Turner said that the time has come to leave again. She wants to visit family in South Carolina and take a cruise to Alaska.



ALWAYS TIME FOR ONE MORE – RETIRING CCA CASEWORKER SOPHIE TURNER GIVES ONE LAST HUG TO FRIEND AND CO-WORKER SOPHIA RIVERA AT HER RETIREMENT. IN HER HONOR, CCA HAS NAMED THE BRIGHTSPACES INFANT/TODDLER AREA AT ITS SYLVAN AVENUE FACILITY AFTER “MS. SOPHIE.”

Co-workers said they will miss Turner's blend of wisdom, compassion and tough love. But mostly, they said, they will miss her hugs.

“I want a hug before you run out,”

Revina told her as he stood in a line. Turner laughed. “I never run out,” she said.

Capitol Steps Show Moved To December

They're coming back, just in time for the holidays. “They” are the nationally known musical political satire troupe, the Capitol Steps, which will be returning to The Shubert Theater in New Haven on Thursday, December 18 for an encore performance for CCA.

The show was originally scheduled for October, but had to be rescheduled after the group discovered they had another engagement booked for Bridgeport.

“Given the closeness of the show's date to Christmas, Hanukkah and the New Year, we are hoping many people will consider giving tickets to the show as gifts to family members and friends,” said Rev. Bonita Grubbs, CCA executive director. “It will surely be a gift the recipient won't soon forget.”

Given that the show will also be taking place after the November presidential election, it tentatively has been titled, “New Year, New Administration, New Material for Us.”

Last October, in their first appearance to benefit CCA, the Steps had the nearly 1,000 people in attendance practically rolling in the aisles with their unique brand of humor and spoof, focused primarily on our elected representatives in Washington, D.C.

Besides being an entertainment home run, the evening also raised \$50,000 (net) to support CCA's programs and services, designed to support families and individuals who are poor in their own efforts to regain their independence and self sufficiency.

Serving the top sponsor of this year's show, as they did in 2007, is the law firm of Stratton Faxon. Other returning sponsors so far include Quinnipiac University / AM 1220 WQUN; Yale-New Haven Hospital; Yale University and Webster Bank. Other 2007 sponsors are currently being contacted.

New this year: New sponsors / past sponsors / program book advertisers increasing their support over 2007 lev-



REGARDLESS OF WHO WINS IN NOVEMBER, THE CAPITOL STEPS WILL BE READY WHEN THEY RETURN DECEMBER 18TH TO PERFORM A BENEFIT FOR CCA.

els will have their new / increased commitments matched, thanks to a grant recently awarded to CCA by a generous donor. Thus a \$2,500 Bronze sponsorship will have a value of \$5,000, thanks to the match. For details, contact CCA Development Director Al May at (203) 777-7848 x 112 / amay@ccahelping.org.

Grants To Focus Parent / Child Development

Changing the attitudes of parents and children in low-income families so that they no longer see themselves as passive victims, but rather as agents of change who can positively influence and shape the world around them is a key component of CCA's overall mission.

Recently, the agency was awarded several grants, totalling more than \$50,000, to launch five initiatives designed to accomplish just those ends.

Grants were also awarded to CCA to support its after-school program, its Advocacy and Education Project and its Neighborhood Assistance services.

The initiatives are:

● Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI): PLTI is an established and proven 20-week interactive adult learning experience, designed to expand the capacity of parents and other caregivers to serve as change agents for their children and families. During the program, participants develop their personal and community development skills and

increase their understanding of the roles that government, media and civic relations play in improving the communities in which they live.

● Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI): A companion program to PLTI, designed for the children, ages 3 to 12, of parents participating in PLTI. Like PLTI, CLTI is designed to last 20 weeks and is meant to help the children develop the personal and social skills needed to be leaders in their schools and communities and to become responsible adults.

● Parents Empowering Parents (PEP): A 10-week program, PEP begins with a parenting education curriculum and works on teaching problem-solving and advocacy strategies. It offers a smaller, more intimate learning environment than PLTI and also can be offered in either Spanish or English or in a bilingual format.

Funding (\$26,000) for PLTI, CLTI and PEP is being provided by The Children's Trust Fund. Matching funds are also being secured for all three initiatives.

● Keep PACE (Promoting Active Civic Engagement): As its name indicates, Keep PACE is designed to encourage participants to select and involve themselves in the CCA advocacy, education, grass-roots organizing and leadership training activities of their choice, with the end goal being the promotion of social change and justice, particularly for women who are poor and of color. Funding for this program will be provided by a \$5,000 grant from the Women and Girls Fund of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

● Parent Liaison Outreach: Funded by a \$19,283 grant from the New Haven Early Childhood Council, this program is designed initially to increase awareness among parents in low-income families of the goals of the Council, with the ultimate goal being to involve these parents in council activities and to get their children enrolled in early child care programs.

This effort will involve the use of both traditional and non-traditional methods (continued on page 4)