



# the Community Voice

CHARTER OAK COMMUNITIES

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR COC RESIDENTS

**Vincent J. Tufo**

*Executive Director*

**Donna Starzecki, SPHR**

*Chief Operating Officer*

**Mary Beth Henry, Editor**



*Above: Laura Augustyn is Property Manager at Wormser Congregate. See story on page 2.*

## *Greetings from the Executive Director*

### *Palmer Square Groundbreaking*

*By Vincent J. Tufo*

On December 7, 2010, Charter Oak Communities (COC) broke ground for its newest residential community, *Palmer Square*. This new community represents the second step of the multi-phase Vidal Court revitalization. The first phase, *Westwood*, located on Progress Drive, is already under construction and scheduled to be completed in June 2011. Vidal Court is a 216-unit State-assisted complex which is being replaced with two on-site and three off-site developments, totaling over 350 mixed-income units.

Guests at the groundbreaking included Stamford Mayor Michael Pavia, State Senator Andrew McDonald and other special guests.

*Palmer Square* is comprised of 16 two and three-story townhouse buildings containing 76 units of one-, two- and three-bedroom rental housing. Additionally, COC will provide supportive services to residents through its comprehensive social services program, which includes an on-site Resident Services Coordinator.

We are enormously proud of the progress we've made over the past decade in creating quality, affordable housing for Stamford residents that are attractive and an asset to their neighborhoods and the entire community.

Newman Architects will serve as project architect for *Palmer Square*. Newman is the architect of Southwood Square, the three phases of the Fairfield Court HOPE VI Revitalization and of *Westwood*. COC acquired a large portion of the *Palmer Square* site from Stamford Health System (SHS), as well as property located on Merrell Avenue next to Vidal Court. SHS granted these parcels to COC in return for a portion of the Vidal Court site, which will be used by SHS to facilitate a major redevelopment of the Stamford Hospital campus following the demolition of Vidal Court.

Residents of Vidal Court and the Vidal Court Resident Association have been involved in planning the revitalization, and their input continues to be helpful and essential.

*Palmer Square* construction will be completed by June 2012. COC has contracted with Family Centers to provide relocation counseling and direct assistance to all Vidal Court households. Family Centers has opened an office at Vidal Court, and both Family Centers and COC are working closely with Vidal Court residents to make the relocation experience as positive as possible.

## *Safety Reminder*

Recently, there was a fire in a unit at Oak Park. A working smoke alarm saved this family as they were able to evacuate the unit after hearing the alarm sound. This shows the importance of smoke alarms. You should change batteries periodically and **never remove the batteries from the smoke detector in your unit.**



From left: Vincent J. Tufo, Executive Director, Charter Oak Communities; State Senator Andrew J. McDonald; Julie B. Fagan, Field Office Director, Hartford, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development; Reverend Richard F. Futie, Pastor, Sacred Heart Church; Gloria G. DePina, member of the Stamford Board of Representatives and Staff Assistant to Congressman Jim Himes; David L. Smith, Senior Vice President, Strategy and Market Development, Stamford Hospital; Pamela A. Koprowski, Public Affairs Adviser, Stamford Hospital; Michael A. Pavia, Mayor, City of Stamford; Anthony Gaglio, Sr., President, Viking Construction, Inc., which is building Palmer Square; and Courtney A. Nelthropp, Chairman, Charter Oak Communities.



### Property Manager Profile

Laura Augustyn has been Property Manager at Wormser Congregate, a 40-unit development for the elderly, for the past 3 1/2 years. Born and raised in Stamford, she is excited to be part of the team at Charter Oak Communities. Laura feels it is important to treat each property as if it were one's own while offering residents excellent customer service. Prior to joining COC, Laura managed Stamford Green on the West Side, a 91-unit residence for the elderly, for a private management company. She is a licensed realtor in the State of Connecticut.

In her previous career in hotel management, Laura covered all facets of operations from marketing and sales to general management where she dealt with human resources issues for Holiday Inn, Sheraton, Super 8 Motels and Marriott working for both corporate and individual owners.

After being educated in both the private and public school system in Stamford, Laura headed to Washington, DC as an intern to Congressman Stewart B. McKinney who represented the 4th congressional district of Connecticut. Her desire to continue in public service led her to earn her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities/Political Science from Marymount College in Arlington, Virginia. She remained in the Washington area for several years while in college and worked for government agencies and in the legal profession before returning to her roots in Stamford.

While working for Sheraton Corporation in New York City, she completed the New York University Hospitality Management Diploma Program as well as getting her CHA (Certified Hotel Administrator), the most prestigious certification available to a hotel general manager and hospitality executive which combines education and experience and ensures that the individual has achieved a high level of expertise.

Laura's contacts in Stamford as well as her kind, caring manner with residents make her a valuable asset to COC and the residents of Wormser Congregate. She feels a special bond with residents and is encouraged by their tenacity.

Laura is a 7-year breast cancer survivor. She thanks her strong faith for getting her through this challenge and giving her the determination to beat cancer. She teamed up with her 96-year-old resident, Ellie Wahlen, who hand-crocheted numerous pink bracelets, in order to raise money to contribute to the American Cancer Society and the Bennett Cancer Center at Stamford Hospital. Breast cancer awareness is an important cause to Laura as she is active in walkathons and marathons for the cure.

### One Year Anniversary Celebration at Fairgate



*Above: Donna Spellman, Director of Self-Sufficiency and Independent Living Programs at Family Centers, Vin Tufo, Executive Director of COC, Bob Cum, Manager, Fairgate, Pam Koprowski, Public Affairs Adviser, Stamford Hospital and Eric Stein, M.D., Medical Director, Optimus Health Care, share a moment at the festivities on November 1st. (Photo courtesy of Marie Johnson.)*

*Below: Recent photos of Westwood, a new residential community on Progress Drive, is scheduled to open June 2011 (courtesy of Azad Kareem).*

## Westwood Progress Update





### Advisory Board Member Profile



private New York investment firm. He recommended new acquisitions, negotiated financing and maintained a line of credit with major New York and Boston banks. This firm was active throughout the United States acquiring and managing industrial, multi-family residential and commercial properties.

Previous to 1970, Jack spent fifteen years with a national franchise chain. His last position was as Regional Manager and he was responsible for the Eastern United States and Canada and added over 500 stores in his region in four years.

Jack received a B.A. in Economics from University of California, Berkeley and an MBA in Management from the University of Santa Clara. He is married with three grown children and nine grandchildren. He also sits on the board of directors for Interfaith Council, Pilgrim Towers, Housing Development Fund and Rippowam Corporation.

Jack A. Penfield has served as an Advisory Board Member to COC since January 2009. He shares his wealth of experience and knowledge with the Board of Commissioners in an advisory capacity.

Jack has been retired since 2000. Prior to that, from 1990 to 2000, he negotiated investment opportunities in Latin America as President of Noradco de Venezuela, C.A. Between the years of 1970 and 1990, Jack served as Senior Vice President for Adco Group, a

### Update on COC Projects

The Masonry & Concrete Restoration continues to move forward at Stamford Manor. The work on the east side of the building is nearing completion with the balcony edge repair complete and the new railing system being installed. The focus is being turned toward the center of the building with the balcony edge repair beginning. Additionally, brick repair work is ongoing as well as the coating of the exterior surfaces.

The Elevator Replacement at Rippowam Manor is underway. This much anticipated project began in November and is scheduled to continue through April 2011 with the installation of two new elevators at Rippowam.

Other projects on the drawing board for the spring include a Roof Replacement at Quintard Manor, the Elevator Replacement at Glenbrook Manor, and the Exterior EIFS Repair at Rippowam Manor.

### Congratulations to All Winners

Thank you to all the residents that completed the Readership Survey of COC's newsletter, The Community Voice. The five winners of the \$50 Visa gift card are as follows: Margarita Collazo, Mark Festo and Patricia Hawkins of Stamford Manor; Helen Putzig of Taylor Street; Doris Carlton of Rippowam Manor. We appreciate your input!

### Resident Corner



Filomena was born into the Damato family in 1930 and lived in the town of Paternopoli, a province of Avellino, Campania, Italy. She had two sisters and three brothers.

She later came to the United States as the wife of John DiMarino and joined a family of five children. In addition, she was blessed with a son of her own, Joe.

Filomena is a woman of many talents and anyone lucky enough to know her appreciates her many fine gifts. Not only is she a great baker and sewer, but she was born with a "Green Thumb."

If you stop by the Margot Wormser Congregate building any day in spring or summer, you will enjoy the gorgeous variety of blooming flowers surrounding the entrance and back yard. Purple velvet fan-shaped flowers envelop the front of the complex nestled among many other exotic plants that continually multiple. This year the sunflowers grew to an amazing six feet.

Vegetables also grow in multitude as Filomena joyously nourishes and prunes over thirty large pots of tomatoes, celery, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant and spices. During the summer, Filomena's garden provided the salad fixings for the Wormser annual picnic.

Filomena is a special person that continually shares her talents with friends, family and residents of Wormser.



Roberto Rulli, Superintendent of Wormser, stands with Filomena DiMarino by her gardens at Wormser.



# Winterize Your Car



In order to keep your vehicle in good working order this winter, please follow these simple tips:

1. Don't delay a service checkup for your car when it's due.
2. Flush the cooling system and replace the coolant.
3. Replace the windshield wiper blades. Put windshield washer fluid in the windshield washer reservoir as plain water will freeze.
4. Have the battery serviced (clean the battery terminal ends and add water) and load-tested to check its ability to hold a charge. If the battery is more than 4 ½ years old, replace it.
5. Use a tire gauge to check the tire pressure. Air contracts with cold, and the tires may become low as the temperature drops.
6. Make sure there is air in the spare tire and that all the proper tire-changing equipment is in the trunk.
7. Make sure the tires are in good condition.
8. Check the lights, heater and defroster.
9. Keep the gas tank as full as possible to prevent moisture from freezing in the gas lines.
10. Get a brake check if you haven't had one in the last six months.
11. Put together an emergency winter kit for the trunk of your car; blanket, extra boots and gloves, ice scraper, small snow shovel, flashlight and kitty litter (for traction when stuck in the snow).



Winter



## Stone Soup

On Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, COC participated in the second Stone Soup for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century 2010 Resource Expo. It was held at the Academy of Information, Technology & Engineering in Stamford. Modeled after the Stone Soup tale about travelers and villagers who bring their own unique ingredients to create a nourishing soup for all, this event brought communities together to serve resources for over 600 families. See picture at right featuring Donna Starzecki, Chief Operating Officer of COC (center) surrounded by her staff from left to right: Edith Shamsid-Deen, Marie Belizor, Cristina Clark and Marysol Velez-Rodriguez.

