



## More Communication

Besides being our point person for SINA homeowners who want help with new mortgage rules, Logan is SINA's director of community engagement and communication. Many of the activities he normally manages, like neighborhood cleanups, knocking on doors, planning gardens and creating murals can't happen during the pandemic. Instead, he has gone digital.

We are now on Facebook and Twitter, along with our website and this newsletter. In addition, Logan has created a new weekly communication called SINA Shares. It provides information on six key areas – health, employment, kids at home, basic needs, Hartford heroes, and ways to help. Anyone interested in receiving SINA Shares can contact Logan at [lsingerman@sinainc.org](mailto:lsingerman@sinainc.org).

Meanwhile, Logan is still connecting neighbors and local businesses for the good of the community. He says "a woman who lives in one of the first SINA homes lost her executive assistant job during the pandemic, so I connected her with Elsa, who runs our Walk to Work program. Then her lawnmower broke and she was worried about keeping up with maintenance. I talked to another SINA homeowner about it, and he ended up mowing her lawn for her!"

The woman's daughter had just graduated with a BA in respiratory care. Due to the pandemic, she was granted a temporary license to start work as a respiratory therapist trainee at Hartford Hospital. Another SINA homeowner also has a daughter with healthcare experience. Both were referred to our Walk to Work program for assistance with job hunting, and they were delighted to learn about this resource.

## Better Business, Too

Many local businesses are hurting from the pandemic, but some have turned the lemons into lemonade. They are finding ways to keep doing business while doing good. Manufacturing company Rafferty's has switched some of their production in order to add masks to their product line. They are also creating protective covers for curtains that make them easier to disinfect. Red Rock Tavern donated 50-60 meals to healthcare workers. J Restaurant is selling discounted lunches to hospital employees. People are calling in to cover the lunch costs, and the restaurant has been serving 300-400 meals per week.

We are proud of and grateful to our business neighbors who demonstrate such caring for our community. Anyone who wants to help can contact Logan at [lsingerman@sinainc.org](mailto:lsingerman@sinainc.org) or can contact J Restaurant directly at 860-527-7764.



SOUTHSIDE INSTITUTIONS  
NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

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## About SINA

Since its founding in 1977 SINA has worked with community organizations on issues such as affordable rental housing, education, public safety, homeownership and commercial development. With dozens of apartment units rehabilitated, homeownership programs, and the opening of The Learning Corridor, its visible impact in the Frog Hollow, Barry Square and South Green neighborhoods has been significant and its community involvement has been a constant presence. Our offices, located at 207 Washington Street, are closed for the duration of the health crisis. For more information call (860) 493-1618 or visit [www.sinainc.org](http://www.sinainc.org). You can follow SINA on Twitter (@sinainc) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/sinainc](http://www.facebook.com/sinainc)). To receive SINA Shares, our weekly news bulletin, by email, contact Logan at [lsingerman@sinainc.org](mailto:lsingerman@sinainc.org).

## Working to Find Jobs

(continued from inside panel)

Wendy Andino-Williams is a data and career specialist at Capitol Community College. She says "I send from 5 to 15 students per semester to Elsa, for jobs in nursing assistantship, pharmacy tech and allied health. One lived in SINA's neighborhood, didn't have a car and needed a stable job to finish her nursing degree. Elsa helped her find work at Hartford Hospital." She adds "we have lots of ESL students who fear their English isn't good enough. Elsa has been very valuable, helping them feel comfortable and empowered to seek work. She's doing an excellent job and I wish there was more of Elsa!"

Elsa Huertas can be contacted at [ehuertas@sinainc.org](mailto:ehuertas@sinainc.org). For more information visit [www.sinainc.org/wtw](http://www.sinainc.org/wtw).

# SINA REPORTS

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[www.sinainc.org](http://www.sinainc.org)



## Adapting to Change

SINA is a partnership between Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital and Trinity College. SINA's mission is to work cooperatively with community stakeholders to restore economic vitality and improve the quality of life for the people who live, work, play, and study in the neighborhoods of South Central Hartford.





## Adapting to Change

**From Our Executive Director, Melvyn Colon**



During a crisis like this pandemic, everything changes. We need to adapt what we do and how we work in ways never seen before. We've made major changes in our programs, described in this newsletter. I've also seen the need to advocate for nonprofit organizations and to manage staff differently during this time.

As housing developers and landlords, SINA has a dual role. We have nearly 100% occupancy and are committed to keeping our tenants, working with them to get through this crisis if they have financial challenges. We've also increased maintenance to make sure our buildings are disinfected.

Our Walk to Work program can no longer see clients in person, or let job seekers into our offices who used to walk in with questions. The work is all being done remotely and we're even providing some clients with computers, thanks to Trinity College.

Community engagement efforts are completely changed, since we can't go door-to-door or schedule neighborhood events. Instead, we are finding new ways to share information, using phone, digital and online communications.

SINA's annual REACH event, our opportunity to showcase scholarship recipients and community leaders, has been cancelled. We are still giving out scholarships and recognizing leaders in different ways. You will find more information on our website.

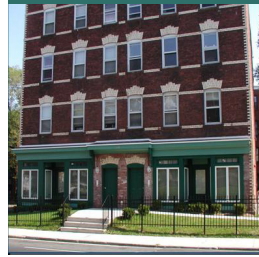
Nonprofit organizations in general, like other small businesses, have had to work with bankers to protect paychecks and continue to offer services. They've had to learn technology like Zoom to serve clients, while figuring out how to work from home.

As a manager, I've found it more important than ever to keep in touch with my team, since I can't see them on a regular basis. I want to make sure they have personal protective equipment and the technology they need to do their jobs remotely. We're also having conversations about how to clean our offices and what process we will use to reopen.



All articles written by Beth Pite.

## Safe, Stable Housing



Cityscape Apartments  
office on Broad St.

SINA builds and sell homes to help improve the beauty and safety of our neighborhood. We also own and manage apartment buildings. Both of these activities have big challenges right now, according to Dean Iannaro, our housing director.

Some people have trouble paying rent until paycheck protection or unemployment kicks in, so we are trying to be supportive. "The governor issued an executive order that allows apartment dwellers to put off paying rent in April, May and June. It also delays evictions and makes some changes to security deposits. We recognize the importance of providing a stable place to live during the pandemic, and we want to keep our tenants," says Dean. SINA is handling rent questions on a case-by-case basis. We have also stepped up our maintenance, to be sure our buildings are disinfected regularly and as safe as they can be during this difficult time.

People who have lost jobs or income need to know that some banks are making accommodations with borrowers to defer mortgage payments. If this would be helpful, you should get in touch with your lending institution. We are also offering advice to SINA homeowners who want help understanding their rights during this crisis. Logan Singerman handles community engagement for us and is helping SINA homeowners who have questions.

## Thankful for Trinity

One of SINA's anchor institutions is Trinity College, which has been dramatically changed by the pandemic. However, that hasn't stopped Trinity from stepping up to assist to our neighbors. Trinity's Carlos Espinosa, who directs the Office of Community Relations & TrinfoCafe, is also a SINA board member. He shared their many activities that help during the pandemic, including the donation of 82 computers to three different Hartford schools. Carlos says "we also donated computers for Walk to Work clients, to help with their job searches."

Trinity created a volunteer meet-up page through its Center for Hartford Engagement and Research. "There are about 350 names on the list, which was shared with organizations that need volunteers," says Carlos. A local insurance company, NassauRe, was so impressed they reached out to ask if their employees could participate.

Another program that Carlos is excited about is the community garden run by students from Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy. He says "they have beehives that pollinate local gardens. They gather the honey and sell it, along with beeswax candles. They're rebuilding all the garden beds, which were eight years old. The donated wood came from local business Rafferty's, through the efforts of Logan at SINA."



## Working to Find Jobs

Our Walk to Work (WtW) program is run by SINA's career navigator, Elsa Huertas. Besides working with job seekers, Elsa connects with other agencies focused on job training, to identify candidates. Our agency partners in WtW are many, varied, and pleased with the support they receive from SINA.

Becky McGuigan of Forge City Works trains people for jobs in the culinary field. She says "we often have Frog Hollow residents in our program who want to work at the SINA institutions. Elsa has also referred folks to us, to help them build skills for a job they desire. We've worked jointly to help three or four residents find jobs. It was helpful to have another resource outside our organization."

Erika De Jesus is a job placement counselor at CREC (Capitol Region Education Council) who works with adult and ESL students. She says "I've referred 20 or 30 people to Elsa. The WtW program is fantastic and right in line with the work we do." She gives the example of Jeremy (not his real name.) He was a little rough around the edges and feeling defeated because he mistakenly thought he had a criminal record. Together, she and Elsa determined that was not the case. Seeing potential in him, they helped him get a hospital job doing environmental work, and then to get a promotion. "Our partnership is great. Elsa is wonderful to work with, very well connected, and the employers respect her," says Erika.

Ana Alfaro works in community relations at Eversource and hosts the Spanish language tv program El Show de Analeh. She says Eversource has utilized Elsa's services to find job candidates. Ana has also recommended two job seekers to WtW. "One person needed help with resume and interview skills. She obtained a job at Hartford Hospital and has been happily working there for two years," says Ana. "Another had a Master's degree in a health field and wanted to work at a hospital. I put her in touch with Elsa, who has direct links to Human Resources departments."

Nilda Fernandez is a UConn social worker who focuses on young adults. She says "whenever I have people who need work, I send them to Elsa. She helps them with resumes, interview skills and more. It's seamless, with no hesitation or barriers." Nilda explains that many young people don't have access to job postings and business networks, so "it's nice to have something for them, to tell them to call this lady who can help."

Lilly Velez-Herrera is the founder and president of Sin Barreras, an organization that helps families from Puerto Rico. She had worked with Elsa before, at the Hispanic Health Council, and considers her a mentor. When Elsa called to offer help after Hurricane Maria, Lilly says "I started sending people to her right and left. She's not only bicultural, she's a straight shooter, but with kindness. Elsa always follows up, good or bad, with people she places in jobs. I have tremendous respect for her work, and her willingness to go the extra mile. Elsa will work with anyone who qualifies, and she is very humble about the amazing work she does."

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