

ACCIO!

Do you recognize this word from the Harry Potter books? Read on. The Safety Alliance for Everyone (SAFE) involves neighbors and volunteers in numerous efforts to clean our streets, making them more attractive to those who live and work here, and less appealing to vandals and petty thieves. These activities include clean-up days, building playgrounds and more.



This summer's clean-up involved multiple teams competing over six weeks, rather than one big event, to help keep people safe from COVID. In the championship round, two teams were from Frog Hollow and one from the Northeast neighborhood. The winning team was Accio Trash, whose members are Rhodée Gine and Marcus Ordonez, a couple who live on Capital Avenue. Accio, inspired by Harry Potter, is a summoning spell. Accio summoned the trash into their bags and made it disappear from the streets! The grand total for SAFE Summer was 75 bags of trash picked up and 25 calls made to 311 to identify problems like potholes.

SINA also supported three more clean-ups. Two were at the end of June, coordinated by the MARG NRZ and by the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery. Another clean-up took place in late August, sponsored by the Frog Hollow Capital Avenue Love Your Block team. The totals for all the summer clean-up were 143 bags of trash collected and 175 volunteer hours contributed.

Another SAFE program involves building a playground on Wolcott Street. Logan Singerman, SINA's Director of Community Engagement, says "there will be a special opening day for families to help paint the posts and celebrate. We also have in progress an art garden on a vacant lot on Broad Street near Madison, with fences and raised beds being built, and soil placed around the site. Plans are to finish the garden next month."

It's in the Bag!

Our back-to-school supply drive exceeded expectations thanks to the help of our three partner institutions, Connecticut Children's, Hartford Hospital, and Trinity College. We were able to provide backpacks with school supplies for 105 students, plus school supply kits for another 20 children who live in the Frog Hollow neighborhood.

Every year SINA distributes backpacks to residents of our apartment buildings. Due to the pandemic, our usual funder was unable to provide the school supplies, so we reached out to our institutional partners for help. "The response was overwhelming," said Logan Singerman, SINA's Director of Community Engagement. "We asked our partners to fill 20 backpacks each, giving us 60 backpacks to distribute. They donated so much we had to buy extra backpacks to keep up with their donations!"



Hartford Hospital's efforts were led by Ariel Pino, Guest Services Manager. Connecticut Children's call went by email from Jane Baird, SINA's board chair, and within 24 hours she received commitments to fill over 50 backpacks. At Trinity College, the track and field team championed the project along with Trinity College Athletes of Color Coalition, and they hope to find other ways to serve throughout the year.



Executive Director's Letter



While this year continues to be challenging, we continue to find ways to serve our community. Our Walk to Work job program, which matches neighborhood residents to available jobs in the SINA institutions, is still helping job applicants, although we now meet with applicants virtually. Please contact Elsa Huertas at (860) 952-4569 for an online appointment. Our community engagement program has grown, and now includes a weekly COVID update that is available electronically. And our affordable housing program is more essential than ever, as we work to keep our residents safe. We awarded REACH college scholarships to deserving local students and recognized community leaders with Neighborhood Service Awards. Because we were not able to do our signature REACH Awards dinner, we created a video to recognize all recipients. Sadly for us, Steve Balconoff, the long-time chair of our REACH committee, retired from Connecticut Children's and the REACH Committee this summer. You can read more about Steve's significant contributions, passion for the community and lasting legacy in this newsletter, where we say thank you, good bye, and good luck.



REACH Out Virtually



SINA is a partnership between Connecticut Children's, 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.



REACH Out Virtually

SINA recently recognized four community leaders with Neighborhood Service Awards and an Institutional Award as part of our annual REACH (Recognition Education Achievement and Community Health) celebration. We also awarded college scholarships to nine Hartford students who demonstrated unusual commitment and promise. All winners are normally recognized at a banquet with food, friends and music, but due to the pandemic, this year's celebration of their achievements is virtual.



CREC Impact Academy
Community Service Day
at Ebony Horsewomen

Neighborhood Service Award recipients were CREC Impact Academy, Elizabeth Giannetta-Ramos, and Delene Falcon. Giannetta-Ramos, a founder of Compass Youth Collaborative and its current Director of Partnerships, was honored for her decades-long commitment to Hartford youth. Falcon was recognized for her ongoing contributions to SINA's neighborhood, helping with clean-ups, safety events and the creation of a playground. CREC Impact Academy's award recognized its mission of doing high school differently, with a personalized, hands-on approach for kids who didn't thrive in traditional schools.

Eric Galm of Trinity College won SINA's Institutional Award, now known as the Stephen Balcanoff Award to honor the long-term SINA board member who retired after more than 40 years at Connecticut Children's. Galm is Associate Professor of Music and Ethnomusicology, Chair of the Department of Music, Co-Director of the Center for Caribbean Studies, and founder of SambaFest. His programs have directly influenced 60,000 people.



Photo Credit:
Isabella Galm

The Ivan Backer Scholarship recipients graduated from Bulkeley High School this year. They are Abedin Abedini, an honor roll student and captain of the soccer and volleyball teams, Tiana Brathwaite, co-president of the National Honor Society, flautist and community activist, and Moctar Mohammat, who works full time to support himself while making honor roll and playing varsity soccer.

Student Support Scholarship winners from Capital Community College were Amyah Harris, a talented writer, Edward M. Ramirez Cahuana, a Dean's List student, Gabriella Adriana Bastos Chaves, studying to become an obstetrician, Khalil K. Howe, the first in his family to attend college, and Paola P. Alvarado Dominguez, a Dean's List student.



Jung Park and
Kelly Styles

The Kelly Styles STEM Scholarship was created by Connecticut Children's Information Solutions team to honor their retired colleague. Sirak Hadgu, the scholarship winner, graduated from Bulkeley. While there he played varsity soccer, was a member of the National Honor Society, and participated in a youth training program through Leadership Greater Hartford.

The 2020 REACH Award videos and program book are available at www.sinainc.org.



Farewell and Thank You

Stephen Balcanoff retired in June after 42 years with Connecticut Children's, and its predecessors, Newington Children's Hospital and Connecticut Children's Medical Center. He served on the SINA board for many years and was the longtime chairman of our REACH (Recognition Education Achievement and Community Health) committee. Widely known for his honesty, kindness and passion for the community he serves, Steve is well-respected and admired by his co-workers.

Jane Baird, Senior Director of External Relations, Connecticut Children's, recalls that when she was hired 18 years ago her boss said Steve was one of the first people with whom she needed to meet. As Jane explains, "he knows everybody, not just CEOs, but also ground level people who really have a finger on the pulse. Steve has such a depth of knowledge, yet he's one of the most agreeable people I've ever met. He's easy to get along with and treats everyone with respect."

Steve's passion for the community comes through in all he does, whether coordinating the Skiers Unlimited program for children with disabilities, a job shadow program for high school students, or the Connecticut Children's Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Benefit Report. He also served as liaison to the Connecticut Hospital Association for community-related activities.

"He did a great job chairing REACH," explains Jane, the current SINA board chair. "He built a structure that has direct influence on kids. His involvement brought it to life, and his stories of students who needed help to pay for college so engaged peers on the hospital's leadership team that several donated individual scholarships."

The REACH committee includes both board members and community members like Nilda Fernandez, who heaps praise on Steve. "He's a very kind, patient and thoughtful man with a good handle on community needs. Steve is able to clarify and shed light through his story telling, to help you put things in perspective. He's a good guy who always looks for the good in people," Nilda emphasizes.

"Steve is such a giving, selfless person, and he's extremely well respected," adds Jane. "Unassuming doesn't capture it – he doesn't need to take credit. Steve provided a key connection point to the community. He inspires others with his passion, and shows people a path." We were honored to have Steve on the SINA board for so long, and wish him all the best in retirement.

Welcome Aboard

SINA's board always represents its partner institutions, and we're pleased to welcome three new members as we say goodbye and thank you to three departing board members. Ryan Calhoun is the Senior Director of Strategic Planning and Network Development at Connecticut Children's. He replaces long time board member and REACH committee chair Steve Balcanoff who retired from Connecticut Children's this summer. Greg Jones will represent Hartford Hospital in place of Barry Kriesberg, our departing board treasurer who retired in the early fall. Greg is the VP of Community Health and Engagement, and has a finance background, including a stint as an investment banker. Abigail Fisher Williamson, Ph.D., is the Charles A. Dana Research Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy and Law at Trinity College. She also directs the Center for Hartford Engagement and Research (CHER.) She replaces Megan Brown, who accepted an exciting new position at another university.



Greg defines his role at Hartford Healthcare as developing and building programs to improve health and livelihood in our community. His strategic focus is on identifying root causes of issues we face, rather than simply looking at outcomes. Greg wants "to dig deeper, look at the social determinants of health and their ties to zip code, with the goal of disconnecting where people live from their health." He enjoys attacking challenges in underserved communities, and founded the Black Men's Health Project for that reason. Greg holds an MBA from Wharton, worked on Wall Street, and moved to CT to manage mergers and acquisitions for Pratt & Whitney. He is delighted to join the SINA board because, as he explains, "at the core, I'm a return on investment guy – and that includes returns on social investments."



Abigail's role at CHER connects her directly to SINA's work, since CHER aims to strengthen Trinity's educational partnerships in Hartford through participatory research, community service and civic engagement among students, staff and faculty. She is "excited about SINA's model of harnessing the power of anchor institutions to contribute to their surrounding neighborhoods, enabling those who live and work on the Southside to connect and work together for positive change. I look forward to identifying how CHER and Trinity can further support these efforts." Abigail holds a Master and Ph.D. in Public Policy from Harvard and a BA from Williams College, and her research has focused on immigration, civic engagement and health equity issues. SINA is pleased to welcome her expertise and enthusiasm to our board.



Ryan's job involves leading all strategic planning, analytics, care management and external physician engagement departments at Connecticut Children's. He says "I'm very passionate about population health and strengthening communities, which is what sparked my interest in working with SINA." In fact, a primary reason Ryan works at Connecticut Children's is because of their commitment to serving all patients, despite their insurance coverage. He also appreciates the institution's commitment to the Hartford community. Ryan looks forward to partnering with leaders on the SINA board to create opportunities for families in the southside of Hartford, and we are delighted to have him join us.