

Keith Hedman's Enduring Legacy at SINA

After 25 years of service, Keith Hedman is transitioning into retirement. He left behind a legacy of integrity, clarity, and calm at the center of SINA's financial operations. Known for his dry wit, professionalism, and quiet leadership, Keith was more than just the numbers guy—he was a trusted, grounding presence during times of change and growth.

When Keith joined SINA, he laid the groundwork for the organization's financial systems. "He set up how we did financials going forward," said Luz Conde, a former colleague. "At one point, we had seven entities—and he made sure we understood how all of them worked."

Paul Mutone, former board member and Treasurer of SINA, echoed this appreciation. "When I reflect on my time working with Keith, I recall financial excellence and competency, unwavering integrity, and his meticulous attention to every detail. Keith played a large role in building and maintaining the financial resiliency of SINA's operations," he said. "He led with precision and principle—and that developed my trust in him. Keith elevated transparency and accountability to the Board."

Keith's diligence and character left an impression outside SINA as well. Edward Engberg of Whittlesey Advising, the accounting firm that partnered with Keith on audits and tax filings, called him "a dream client." "Keith was always a pleasure to work with—professional, personable, and incredibly detail-oriented. As an audit client, he consistently demonstrated a high standard of financial stewardship, reconciling everything down to the penny," Edward said.



Former Executive Director Luis Caban remembers Keith as "the Budget Protector who fights like a bear," especially during one of SINA's most challenging financial times—when member institutions dropped from five to three. Through it all, Keith remained dependable and sharp. "You could always count on him to be present, well-informed, and ready to take on any challenge," Luis said.

Melvyn Colón, who succeeded Luis as Executive Director, echoed that sentiment, describing Keith as a leader guided by 'diligent stewardship' and a deep commitment to protecting the organization's assets.

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'He was the institutional memory,' Melvyn added. 'And he was always willing to help.'

Dean Iannaro, a longtime colleague, emphasized the trust Keith built through his work. "The condition of our finances was always good. We didn't have to worry," he said. "We had clean books, and I always had what I needed to report to funders like CHFA, DOH, LISC, and Leviticus."

His work wasn't limited to accounting. Keith also oversaw technology—working with IT consultants, handling cybersecurity, and ensuring staff had the tools they needed. He pitched in at events, offered historical context, and even lent his truck when things needed moving.

Keith's personality defied assumptions. "By appearance, you might think he was a conservative guy—but then his phone would ring and it would be heavy metal," Melvyn laughed. "It always made people chuckle." Keith loved cars, drove in from the suburbs, and often talked about weekends at Jerzie Joe's or Mission BBQ. He appreciated all cultures. "He loved Puerto Rican food, Jamaican food—whatever was around, he'd eat it without complaint," Melvyn said. "He talked to everyone who walked into the office."



Keith was also a steady guide through uncertainty. Whether navigating a complex COVID relief loan, helping launch the HIP initiative, or resolving billing disputes, he applied his deep knowledge, common sense, and calm presence to every challenge. "I always learned something from him," Melvyn said. "He helped me make sense of the law and helped SINA avoid risk."

As Keith transitions into retirement, his colleagues reflect not only on his professional achievements but also on the quiet strength with which he faced life's challenges. Through it all, he maintained traditions—returning to Cape Cod year after year and nurturing friendships that grounded him.

As he casts off into retirement, Keith does so with the admiration and gratitude of his colleagues—and a few parting words of advice. "Make time to relax. Go fishing. You earned it," Dean said. Melvyn added, "You have a lot to live for—take care of your health. And I wish you lots of good fishing in the future."



Forge City Works: The Grocery on Broad

Forge City Works' initiative, The Grocery on Broad, located at 563 Broad Street, is a powerful response to food insecurity in Hartford. The store operates on a sliding-scale pricing model based on household income, ensuring that fresh and nutritious groceries remain affordable to all, while allowing customers to use subsidies like SNAP. Their work centers on three key goals: affordable access to healthy food, job training for opportunity youth and individuals facing employment barriers, and long-term sustainability as a social enterprise. Through programs like their Culinary and Customer Service Training Program, they reinvest in the local community while empowering residents with meaningful skills and employment opportunities. This holistic approach is about dignity, equity, and creating lasting change.

At the heart of this work is Mayra Rodriguez, the General Manager and a long-time neighborhood resident. Nominated for the 2025 Neighborhood Service Award, Mayra has been instrumental in launching and operating The Grocery on Broad. Ben Dubow, Executive Director at Forge City Works, describes her as "a passionate, mission-driven problem solver" as she leads with empathy and purpose while creating a culture of respect and trust. Under her leadership, the store has grown to over 1,000 registered members and serves more than 3,000 people. Mayra engages deeply with the community, from organizing quarterly meetings to supporting seniors and attending local events. She has navigated challenges such as SNAP certification delays with transparency and compassion. For Mayra, the mission is personal: "I want to make sure people feel seen, heard, and valued." Her leadership has transformed the market into a true community resource and a beacon of hope.



Celebrating Community Heroes Through Young Voices

The 4th Annual REACH Young Author Awards ceremony was held on May 14 at Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy to honor local students who wrote and illustrated original books. Students in grades K through 5 entered a book-writing contest centered on the theme of Community Heroes. Winning books were published with copyrights, International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs), and bar codes. The books were printed and bound by the CRT Print Center with support from the Betty Knox Foundation. Thanks to their generosity, copies will be available at all Hartford Public Library branches as well as the students' schools.

Ten books were selected from 16 submissions, recognizing 18 students as winning authors and illustrators. The keynote speaker was Stefania Munzi, author and illustrator of *C'era una Volta in Wooster Square* and *Jojo's Tiny Ears*. Munzi is also an art teacher at Hartford Public Schools. All winners received trophies, certificates, copies of their professionally printed books—and a signed copy of one of Stefania Munzi's books.

The winning entries were the following:

The Adventures of Coney

Written by Romy Blanco-Faustini and Genesis Martinez; illustrated by Arianna Moyer-Washington and Meadow Sobolow, all fifth graders at CREC Montessori Magnet School. *This story follows a safety cone who becomes a hero on a mission to protect roads and people alike.*

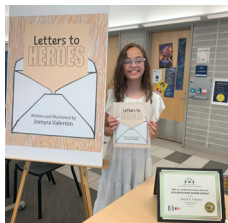


Bird Boy

Written and illustrated by Aryash Gupta, a kindergarten student at Betances Learning Lab Elementary School. *The story follows a young boy and his friend who help a bird family find a new home, bringing happiness to their community.*

Books Galore

Written and illustrated by Dhyanaa Satish Kumar, a fourth-grade student at Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School and a four-time REACH winner. *This book tells the tale of a cheerful toad who shares stories to brighten a gloomy world.*



Letters to Heroes

Written and illustrated by Jomyra R. Valentin, a fifth grader at CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School. *The story honors everyday people who make a difference through kindness and bravery.*

Lola the Community Hero

Written and illustrated by Mayra Almódovar, a fifth-grade student at CREC Montessori Magnet School. Lola teams up with a service dog to help save a girl during a medical emergency, showing how courage and care can make someone a hero.



Sophia Learns to Swim

Written and illustrated by Neishlee Guzman, a third-grade student at Maria Sanchez Elementary School. *This story follows Sophia as she overcomes her fear of swimming with the help of a supportive lifeguard.*



The Transformers

Written and illustrated by Anaya Gupta, a third-grade student at Betances Learning Lab Elementary School and a three-time REACH winner. *This book tells the story of scientists who combat pollution using creativity and teamwork, inspiring a young boy to make a difference.*



Victor the Garbage Man

Written by Dayanand Arulampalam and illustrated by Emmett Ennever and Jason Devaux, all fifth graders at CREC Montessori Magnet School. *The book highlights the important work of a sanitation worker and how one encounter with a boy named Alex inspires change.*

Will Tiara Feel Smart Again?

Written and illustrated by Viyankhaa Satish Kumar, a first-grade student at Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School and a two-time REACH winner. *Tiara begins seeing the world in unusual colors after an accident and is helped by a doctor who restores her sense of clarity.*



Xyllah's Mystery Illness

Written by Natalie Reyes Mazaba and Sophia Stewart; illustrated by Alice Rodriguez Villanueva and Jayleen Diaz. These fifth-grade students at CREC Montessori Magnet School tell the story of Xyllah, a young girl whose summer takes a turn when she is faced with an unexplained illness.

Meet Priscilla



SINA is excited to welcome Priscilla Rubio as its new Community Building Coordinator. Priscilla brings a strong commitment to community-driven work and inclusive engagement. In this role, she is responsible for turning strategic goals into meaningful initiatives that support residents and strengthen neighborhoods.

A first-generation Latina, Priscilla was born into a Paraguayan family and spent her early childhood in Paraguay before moving to the U.S. Her lived experience as a bilingual, bicultural community member gives her a unique and personal understanding of the communities she serves. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Hispanic Studies from Trinity College and first joined SINA as a Community Engagement intern through the Trinity College Liberal Arts Action Lab in 2024. Fluent in Spanish and passionate about equity, she is deeply skilled in building trust, fostering relationships, and leading collaborative, resident-centered projects.

Priscilla is also a co-author of the Hartford Bites series, created in partnership with College Bites, which showcases Hartford's rich local culture and flavor. As an active member of SINA's REACH Committee, she continues to play a vital role in strengthening community ties and promoting neighborhood vitality across Hartford.

To volunteer for an upcoming community events, contact Priscilla at prubio@sinainc.org.

Hartford Leadership Academy

The Hartford Leadership Academy continues to spark real change by equipping residents with the tools and support to bring their visions to life. One inspiring example comes from alumnus Hendrick Xiong, whose project "Zine for the Hart" celebrates the creativity of 21 local Hartford artists. What began as a vision during their time in the program has become a published zine, centering Hartford and its creators. Hendrick explains, "Zine for the Hart is a collection of creations made with the city of Hartford and its creators at the forefront." After months of dedication, the zine is now complete, and a public celebration will be held at Semilla Café on July 25th from 7:00–9:00 PM. The event will include artist readings, personal reflections, and a chance to connect with the community. It's a powerful testament to how dreams nurtured in the Academy can grow into impactful community work.



Looking ahead, the Hartford Leadership Academy is preparing to launch its fall 2025 cohort starting the second week of September—with an exciting milestone of offering two simultaneous cohorts: one in English and one in Spanish. Currently the alumni from last year's cohort are now stepping into leadership roles and preparing to welcome and guide the incoming participants. This free 10-week program provides weekly workshops, personalized coaching, dinner, and free childcare. The English cohort will meet Mondays and the Spanish cohort on Wednesdays, both from 6:00–8:00 PM, with dinner served at 5:30 PM. This opportunity is open to all individuals who live, work, or worship in Hartford Priority is given to city residents but not required. Join us by scanning the QR code to apply and take part in a journey of leadership, growth, and community impact.



Programs runs from September 8, 2025 through November 21, 2025.

Application Deadline: August 31, 2025

For more information visit: sinainc.org/leadershipacademy

About SINA

Since its founding in 1977 SINA has worked with residents and community organizations on issues such as affordable rental housing, education, public safety, homeownership and employment. With nearly 100 homes built, a thriving Walk to Work Program, and the creation of community gardens and murals, its visible impact in the Frog Hollow, Barry Square, South Green, and Behind the Rocks neighborhoods has been significant. SINA continues operations today in offices at 207 Washington Street. For more information call (860) 493-1618.

