

# Spotlight on the First Bright Spot



Another Knox "Bright Spot," this one located on Albany Avenue, shows what a little sprucing up can do to make Hartford look more inviting to both residents and visitors.

The unique and innovative Bright Spot program selected its first "Bright Spot," a joint effort funded by United Technologies with Knox Parks to reclaim and beautify Hartford. Partnering with a local organization, Knox beautifies an unattractive area and makes it a *Bright Spot*. In this case it was

cooperating with Leadership Greater Hartford (LGH) to improve the McDonough School's playground and surrounding areas.

LGH Program Director Rita Rivera Ortiz and Knox Executive Director Jack Hale led the work effort that also included support from the Knox Green Crew. They weeded and remulched the front and rear of the school, improved the ball field, fenced in a portion of the courtyard to create a garden for the students and installed three picnic tables for an outdoor classroom. This large undertaking was a result of careful planning. Some of their comments included, "I learned that no matter how great the task, you can accomplish much by teamwork." And, "I loved everyone, all of us are distinct yet we all worked together toward a common goal. It put everyone at the same level and was very humbling."

If you want to nominate a Bright Spot, call us at 951-7694, ext. 16. We would be happy to send to you our new brochure with additional information.

## Knox Partners with CL&P's SmartLiving Center to Offer Fee-for-Service Work

When the Connecticut Light and Power Company's SmartLiving Center Administrator, Kathy Drake, wanted to improve the front of the SmartLiving Center, she enlisted the help of the Knox Parks Foundation. Knox provides fee-for-service work as well as educational programs in horticulture for their Green Crew as they beautify the Hartford area through plantings of trees, shrubs and flowers. Knox provides job training and GED classes for their Green Crew of 15 young people ages 16 to 21. The fee-for-service work includes planting of shrubs and perennials that the Crew did for the Center and landscape maintenance such as lawn mowing and pruning of small trees and shrubs.



Noreen Slevin of CL&P's SmartLiving Center watches members of Knox Parks' Green Crew install landscaping on the Center's Newington grounds, a recent example of Knox's fee-for-service program to help to beautify Hartford and surrounding towns.

The SmartLiving Center is an educational resource center, located on the Berlin Turnpike in Newington, dedicated to environmentally responsible home construction practices and energy innovations for today's home. The Center has many energy-saving products as well as Energy Star-rated appliances on display. It also has a new outdoor landscaping display, and hosts monthly seminars on energy conservation topics.

Fee-for-service work is even more important now for Knox because of a shift in priorities in fund-

ing by YO! Hartford. In order to maintain programs and activities, Knox is seeking funding from other sources and is looking for additional fee-for-service work.

To learn more about upcoming events at the SmartLiving Center, visit their web-site at [www.clp.com](http://www.clp.com) or call (860) 665-2351. If you would like to employ Knox to do a fee-for-service job in the greater Hartford area, call Ron Pitz at (860) 951-7694, ext. 12.

# The Green Thumb Print

The newsletter of the  
**KNOX**  
PARKS FOUNDATION  
FALL 2002

# Hartford Notable Trees Tour A Huge Success

Close to 200 people attended a Notable Trees of Hartford tour. Edward A. Richardson, a member of the Connecticut Botanical Society and well-known tree expert, and Irene McHugh of Cedar Hill Cemetery, conducted it. City of Hartford Forester John Kehoe assisted Ed. The tour included the exceptional trees of the Institute of Living and Cedar Hill. Irene also added commentary on the historical aspects of the Cemetery. In addition to Ed and Irene, the planning committee consisted of Doe Hentschel (Program Director), Bob Finder, Mary Alice McNaboe and Joel Neuwirth of LGH; former councilman Mike McGarry; and Jack Hale and Tony Spinelli of the Knox Parks Foundation, with support in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council and the City of Hartford.

The Farmington Avenue Business District provided financial support; the Greater Hartford Transit District supplied a specially-equipped free bus for the handicapped and Dattco Inc. provided four coach busses at a reduced price; and Great Harvest Bakery donated a slice of bread for everyone. Along the way an interpretation of the parks and neighborhoods was provided, and each of the five busses had an "expert" on board that could answer questions.



*Irene McHugh, center right, talks to participants about Cedar Hill Cemetery during Knox's May bus tour of Notable Trees of Hartford. Co-tour guide Ed Richardson is pictured to Irene's right. A similar tour will be held on Saturday, September 28.*

The day was a tremendous success due in large part to Steve Grant's article in the *Hartford Courant*. Because of it there is a waiting list of about 150 persons for a similar tour that will be offered on Saturday, September 28, 2002.

## Farewell, Friends

by Jack Hale

Knox lost three longtime friends this summer.

**Jackie Lloyd**, board member and past president, was with Knox for many years. She brought the eye of an experienced landscape designer, the no-nonsense focus of a successful business owner, and the passion of a person who truly loved plants. She was instrumental in forging a strong relationship between Knox and the Garden Club of Hartford, and helped to establish successful fundraising events for the foundation. She was one of a kind.

**Paul Regnier** was one of our stalwart garden volunteers. He helped maintain the wonderful demon-

stration vegetable gardens at our former headquarters in Elizabeth Park. At other times he employed his considerable writing talents as a volunteer writer for the *Green Thumb Print*. People who attend our Art for the Parks event will certainly miss his wonderful rustic garden furniture.

**Dick Carney** was another garden volunteer in the park. Irish to the core and a dedicated patriot, he brought a special flavor to our favorite motley crew. From a cedar tree in his backyard he crafted a wonder flagpole that still stands proudly in front of the Elizabeth Park visitor center.

Knox was honored by the time these wonderful people chose to spend with us, helping to make Hartford a greener and more beautiful place. We will surely miss them all.

## Short Takes

### ART FOR THE PARKS RETURNS

Join us for Knox's premiere event of the year. Our unique cocktail party and auction of work from local artists returns to the Old State House on Friday, October 25. This year the Farmington Valley Arts Center will select and display the art, adding many of their artists to a selection of popular artists from past events. Call Knox at 951-7694 for more information or to make sure you receive an invitation. Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities are available.

### SUPPORT THE UNITED WAY/KNOX

Many people will soon be participating in workplace campaigns of the United Way of the Capital Area. An Associate Agency, Knox encourages everyone to be generous. We ask, if you choose to designate any part of your contribution for the Knox Parks Foundation, that you check the box requesting that

we (the recipient) acknowledge your gift. Otherwise we won't know who is supporting us.

### KNOX GOES TROPICAL (WITH YOUR HELP)

In recognition of the One Book for Greater Hartford campaign going on this fall, Knox will prepare a special exhibit for February's Connecticut Flower and Garden Show. The One Book campaign features *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, by Edwidge Danticat, a remarkable book set partly in Haiti. The Knox exhibit will be a garden composed of plants mentioned in the book. We seek to borrow tropical plants that could be used for the 4-day show. For a list of the plants or to offer yours, call Knox at 951-7694. For more information about the One Book program call Connecticut Center for the Book at Hartford Public Library (695-6360) or visit <http://www.onebookforgreaterhartford.org/>.

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## Knox Provides Teacher Training for Hartford Educators

When the Hartford Schools Department needed assistance with their new kit-based science program, Science Director Ken Fastiggi called upon the Knox Parks Foundation's Return to Science program. The first teacher workshop began this past spring when horticulture director Ron Pitz guided 24 educators through the National Science Resource Center's "Plant Growth and Development" unit.

The second workshop, "Ecosystems," was also a hands-on, activity-based program that used the "bottle biology" concept of using soft drink containers to make a combined aquarium-terrarium. Although somewhat intricate in concept, the model is a very valuable unit to teach students about the complex relationships in the environment, including problems with run-off from the soil into waterways.

The aquatic and terrestrial plants used actually do support fish (*Gambusia* or mosquito fish), crickets and Isopods or sow bugs. The unit further explores the politics and economics of these ecological rela-



*Jeff Dyreson demonstrates during a Knox-sponsored training workshop how teachers can use a soft drink container to teach their students about the ecology.*

tionships. UCONN Sea Grant Educator Heather Crawford and Wethersfield high school teacher Jeff Dyreson presented this unit.

Both the written evaluations taken immediately after each workshop and a follow-up telephonic interview were highly positive and demonstrated the value of each. In a follow-up letter, the Director for Science for Hartford Public Schools concluded, "Again, the Hartford community very much appreciates your efforts. We hope the Knox Foundation is willing to provide professional development sessions for our instructors during the 2002-03 school year. We certainly need the quality training the Knox Parks Foundation has proven they can provide."

Knox is eager to help educators not only from Hartford, but also teachers from other communities as well on a space-available basis. Please call Tony Spinelli at (860) 951-

7694, ext. 16, for more information.

These programs are funded by the Ensworth Charitable Trust, Northeast Utilities and the Travelers/Citigroup Foundation.

## Knox, OPMAD Team Up Again

by Alicia Flynn

This summer Knox "learned" all sorts of lessons from a younger generation. For a few weeks compost became a type of plant-eating bug, zucchinis became avocados, and the most important daily task was picking green tomatoes. How was it that the horticultural world was turned on its head at Laurel Street?

OPMAD (Organized Parents Make a Difference)



*OPMAD students select a worm for their miniature soil composter.*

chose to send their Hartford middle-school students to the Knox Parks Foundation for the second summer in a row for a hands-on horticultural curriculum. Two schools sent 13 students, each, to visit Knox two afternoons a week as part of OPMAD's program entitled "Environmental Science." At Knox they had a chance to explore the out-of-doors and experience science in ways that are not available in a classroom.

Through these experiences they learned about a plant's growth cycle; how it moves from seed to flowering plant to seeds and compost that can give rise to a new crop, where food comes from and how it is used in the foods they eat; and how the environment around them affects their lives.

Organized Parents Make a Difference (OPMAD) is a parent-run after-school organization with a ten-year history of providing fun learning experiences to Hartford children. In the words of Kathy Evans, program director, they believe in "nurturing the talents of the whole child and building connections with role models in the community."

The summer program between Knox and OPMAD was made possible with grants from the Walton J. Bissell Foundation, the Elizabeth Carse Foundation and the Charles Nelson Robinson Trust.

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## Putting the Community Back into Gardening



Dennis Yousef, left, and Fitzroy Reid stand beside one of the growing beds that they, along with others, helped to construct at Knox's School Street community garden.

by Donna Gordon

Thanks to Andy Hatch, garden coordinator and Trinity College graduate student, the School Street garden is flourishing and is definitely building community. Eight beds are in use, and more people constantly express interest. More important is the sense of community and camaraderie that has developed among neighborhood youth as a result of the community garden. Andy has captured the interest and cooperation of young people in the School Street area. They have planted flowers and vegetables in the

garden, in beds and in old tires. They have connected with Andy as a positive role model and are even eager to begin building a patio and *casita* (shelter) in the middle of the garden.

A year ago Knox executive director Jack Hale and Trinity anthropology professor Jane Nadel-Klein joined forces to build a community garden on School Street. Nadel-Klein's freshman seminar identified ownership of the lot, and did the major leg work in securing and preparing the garden space. A community design process backed by garden designers David and Sharon Mann led to a wonderful garden plan. The School Street community garden has really proven to be a community project involving diverse individuals in the city of Hartford. The School Street community is building an oasis of culture, pride and victory in the garden. We look forward to watching it continue to grow and to nurture the souls of those connected with it.

## Knox Completes Program Staffing – Here We Are!

by Jack Hale

The Knox Parks Foundation has now completed a significant staff restructuring presented in its strategic plan. It is now prepared to tackle a wide range of program initiatives with a base in a diverse collection of staff skills.

The senior member of the Knox program team is Ron Pitz. With years of experience as owner of a landscaping company and a long run at Knox managing job training and crew-based landscaping efforts, Ron is our primary horticultural resource and the base of our logistical efforts. His Green Crew helps build community gardens and school gardens and assists with all sorts of beautification efforts throughout the city.

Tony Spinelli joined Knox a year ago, capping a career at Northeast Utilities and years of experience designing and implementing a wide range of educational programs. He brings those programming skills to bear on Knox efforts to train teachers, educate community gardeners, and strengthen the educational aspects of our Green Crew program.

The most recent addition to the team is Donna Gordon who has taken on our outreach and community organizing efforts. She brings with her years of experience in various community organizing and social service roles. Her focus will be bringing together the networks of teachers, gardeners, employers and community groups who will provide the key elements of Knox programs.



Donna Gordon, Knox's new community network builder, is shown here with Tony Spinelli, left, Knox program developer/manager, and Ron Pitz, Knox job training and landscaping coordinator.

This solid and diverse team together intends to bring Knox programming "to the next level." The completion of this new staffing model has been the result of a substantial, 3-year grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This core funding has been augmented by a program contract with YO! Hartford and smaller program grants from numerous other sources.

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