



## PRESS RELEASE

Contact:

Steve Scarpa

Manager, Communications and Public Relations

Cell: 860-559-4873

E-mail: [sscarpa@hplct.org](mailto:sscarpa@hplct.org)

### **Hartford Public Library to Partner With Foodshare to Set Up Food Pantry at Barbour Branch**

HARTFORD, January 28, 2021 – In an exciting new partnership, Hartford Public Library’s Barbour Branch Library, thanks to a partnership with Foodshare, will now become a food distribution center for Northeast neighborhood families in addition to offering regular library services.

Shelf-stable groceries and fresh fruit, when available, will be distributed outdoors at the branch, located at 261 Barbour Street, the second and fourth Thursdays of the month from 3 to 4 pm while the branch is closed to the public.

“We are extremely excited to embark on this partnership with Foodshare and to continue our commitment to serving the people of the Northeast neighborhood in ways that will feed their hearts, minds, and bodies,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, HPL’s president and CEO.

“I strongly believe Hartford Public Library is one of our strongest anchor institutions in Hartford. HPL is not just a traditional public library; the HPL offers various holistic services to our community. HPL and all their branches are at the center of our communities. Community members’ love, trust, and know they can receive assistance and help from the library,” said Yahaira Escibano, programs partner coordinator for Foodshare.

The library will also partner with “Our Piece of the Pie,” a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth with the key competencies needed to overcome barriers and succeed in education and employment. Teenagers affiliated with the non-profit will work at the Barbour Library helping to bag and distribute the food.

It’s an example of how community partnerships can extend each organization’s reach and impact. In this instance, thanks to this one relationship, much needed food gets distributed, teenagers receive practical work experience, and Hartford residents receive an introduction to the services the library can provide.

“It is so needed in this neighborhood,” said Irene Blean, manager of the Barbour Library. “We want to support the whole person.”

The Library and Foodshare started working together about a year and a half ago, specifically providing after-school and summer snacks for children. The two organizations had been in conversations on how to deepen their relationship, said Bonnie Solberg, coordinator of branch services.

“We were looking for a way to expand our partnership where we can do it right now,” Solberg said. “In these challenging times, this kind of outreach gives us the opportunity to have an immediate impact.”

Marie Jarry, director of public services, believes this is the first time in Connecticut that a library and Foodshare have entered into a formal partnership. If the program is successful at Barbour, the library may look for ways to extend food distribution to other branches. "The need is increasing," Jarry said.

Blean believes that this is also an opportunity to extend what would be considered more traditional library services. To that end, Blean is holding a Valentine's Day themed event in conjunction with the first food distribution on February 11.

Blean and her team will recite poetry and hand out chocolate Hershey kisses to whomever comes to the library from 3 to 4 pm. The Library on Wheels will also be on hand to distribute novels by bestselling author Eric Jerome Dickey, and other romance titles.

"We hope to create more engagement in what we are offering," Blean said.

In addition to the bags of groceries, Blean and her team will distribute 25 new children's winter coats donated by Lawrence International.

The School Choice Coordinator, a Hartford Behavioral Health representative, and the Library's intern from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work will be present at the event to provide assistance.

For more information about Foodshare's work, visit [foodshare.org](http://foodshare.org).

For more information about Our Piece of the Pie, visit [opp.org](http://opp.org).

For more information about Hartford Public Library, visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org).

### **About Hartford Public Library**

Now celebrating its 127th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).