

## **Catholic Charities Provides Housing for those in Need & Puts Faith in Action**

**By Rowena Daly**

For some former prisoners, the end of incarceration is perhaps the scariest time in their life. They want to re-enter society, but they simply lack the tools to build a structured life. Their challenges are staggering – obtaining a job, re-establishing family ties, making new and positive friendships and finding a place to live.

Without assistance, these individuals will most likely re-offend and return to prison.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County's (CCFC) recognizes this need and helps guides these individuals through the Connecticut Collaborative on Re-Entry (CCR) program which offers intensive strengths-based case management and permanent housing for up to 25 individuals who have a history of chronic homelessness due to repetitive incarceration. The program was formerly known as F.U.S.E. (Frequent Users of Support Enhancements).

“Assisting these individuals with housing, counseling and obtaining a job proves to be one of the best ways that we as a community can reduce the rates of recidivism,” said Ms. Smith, MSW, a determined woman who has overseen the Catholic Charities Housing Programs for 2 years including CCR.

Prior to joining, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, Ms. Smith worked for 21 years at the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. She then relocated to Connecticut where she has worked for the past 10 years in Homeless Prevention Programs including the last two years with Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

According to Ms. Smith, 40 individuals have successfully moved through the Connecticut Collaborative on Re-entry program over the past 6 years – securing appropriate housing and becoming contributing members of society.

The Connecticut Collaborative on Re-entry Program (C.C.R.), formerly known as F.U.S.E. (Frequent Users of Support Enhancements) is operated through collaboration with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), CT Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS), CT Department of Correction (DOC), CT Judicial Branch of Court Support Services Division (CSSD), and the CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH),

Other program criterion includes client history of substance abuse, mental health, and/or co-occurring disorders.

*There is no application process through CCFC; qualifying applicants are pre-selected by CT DMHAS.*

**Program Contact: Vilma Vega, 203-416-1612**

**Additionally, CCFC partners with the following agencies through the Greater Bridgeport Opening Doors Continuum of Care, and the Greater Bridgeport HIV/AIDS Consortium:**

ABCD

AIDS CT

Alpha Community Services

Bridgeport Region Department of Social Services

Bridgeport Housing Authority

Bridge House

Bridgeport Community Health Center

Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition

CT Works

Career Resources

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH)

Connecticut Housing Coalition

Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

FSW, Inc.

Greater Bridgeport Mental Health

St. Vincent's Behavioral Health Center

Operation Hope

Refocus Outreach Ministries

Recovery Network of Programs

Southwest Community Health Center

Supportive Housing Works

The United Way

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services