# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



years of service and impact



Diamonds are Forever

#### Through the years

### New Opportunities, Inc.

#### 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act.

New Opportunities for Waterbury, Inc. was incorporated

Workforce Training begins

Youth Programming is initiated

#### 1980s

Hardship Weatherization Pilot Project - public/private/state partnership is initiated and funded by overcharges by the Oil companies

Energy Department computerizes intake system
Energy Innovation Award is presented to NOI by the State of
Connecticut and the US Department of Energy

Afro-Latin-Indian Scholarship/Festival is established

Energy Consumer Education Program is initiated

Elderly Services Division established and grows in the 80s

Day Care Division is established

Oil Furnace Retro-Fit Pilot Project is initiated

Fiscal Department computerizes operations

First Employee Scholarship is awarded

Child Care CDA Training Grant is awarded

Statewide Energy Program is established

### 1990s

Family Preservation Program established Miles for Meals Walk-a-thon started

**Eviction Prevention Program begins** 

Families in Traiining Pilot is awarded

Minority AIDS Prevention Grant received from Centers for Disease Control

Operation of a 55-bed, AIC Residential Facility

Legal Clinic established

Treatment Foster Care Program began

Alternative Incarceration Day Program began

Family Reunification Program established

Summer Urban Initiative begins

Housing Assistance and Counseling Program is initiated

Head Start Extended Day Programming is initiated

NOW, Inc. is designated as a Licensed Child Placement Agency, Redevelopment Agency, and a Community Housing Development organization

Elderly Home Safety Program is initiated

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Technical Assistance Grant is awarded

Justice Division is established

Camp Layton Rose is operated by NOW, Inc.

Holley-McDaniel Transitional Living Centers Open

Ancestors Community Charter High School is established

Muriel Moore Child Development Center opens

Agency designated as CAA for Meriden, Wallingford, Berlin, and Southington

Awarded operations of Emergency Shelter in Meriden

#### 1970s

NOW, Inc. sponsors a Food Co-Op.

The agency sponsors a Neighborhood Supermarket (Mike's Market)

NOW, Inc. moves from North Main Street to the Human Service Center

Energy Assistance Program begins

Management Division concept initiated. Divisions include:
Head Start

Community Services

Research, Development & Planning

Legal Aid spins off from NOW, Inc.

Consumer Education/Protection started as a Title VI Comprehensive Employment & Training Act (CETA) Project

#### **Elderly Services Division expansion**

Elderly Services Division is established

Elderly Services programs are established including: Senior Companion Program, Elderly Transportation, and Elders Helping Elders program

Foster Grandparent Program begins

Elderly Nutrition Program is initiated

Elderly Outreach Program is established

Comprehensive Outreach Program for Elders is established

#### 2000s

The agency launches an agency-wide Case Management Software System (CMS)

New Opportunities of Greater Torrington is established

Green Gutridge Terrace Independent Living Center opens

Agency awarded One Stop Operations for Northwest CT

CT Manufacturing Assistance Center is established

Community Health Workers begin work in the community

The Diaper Bank is established

Agency designated as a Community Rehabilitation provider through the Department of Rehabilitation Services

The Fatherhood Program begins

The agency partners with municipalities for Census 2020

Agency awarded as Navigator and Assist Agency for Affordable

Care Act outreach

Patricia A. Mayfield CT Food 4 Thought Hydroponic Center is built and the distribution of lettuce to Emergency Shelters and Food Pantries begins

Project Longevity is established

# Mission

To improve the quality of life for economically disadvantaged individuals by providing the necessary resources to increase the standards of living, foster self-improvement, and maximize self-empowerment.

# Vision

Building on roots and branching out to transform the community into a safe and prosperous place.



# A message from our President/CEO

# Management Team

William R. Rybczyk President/CEO

Dr. Omar Andujar Chief Administrative Officer

Mark E. Kovitch Chief Financial Officer

Joanne Balaschak Director of Energy Services

Julie Turrell Director of Human Resources

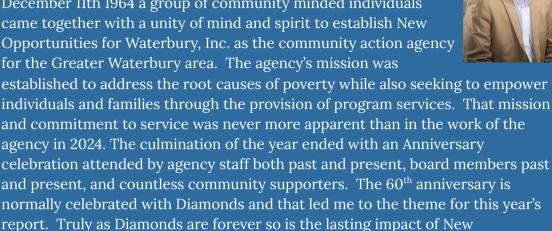
Gawdys Grullon Director of Research, Development and Planning

Brian Bonds Director of Residential and Integrated Services

Steven Burkman Director of Information Technology



2024 was a landmark year in the history of the organization. On December 11th 1964 a group of community minded individuals came together with a unity of mind and spirit to establish New Opportunities for Waterbury, Inc. as the community action agency for the Greater Waterbury area. The agency's mission was



Throughout 2024 the agency provided services and assistance to those in need. This included emergency food and fuel assistance in record numbers. This included increased demands for housing and early learning services. Record numbers of customers came in seeking basic needs assistance and were provided with financial assistance to stabilize their households. This also included the expansion of our Foster Grandparent programming into the Torrington region and the construction of three new greenhouse bays to support the CT Food 4 Thought Hydroponic facility. The care and compassion demonstrated by our staff working with customers is as evident today as it was 60 years ago. The building of partnerships and the seeking of creative strategies to engage the community have also been the hallmark of the agency for the past 60 years. These commitments and values will guide us into an ever changing funding landscape in the coming years. Adjustments and flexibility will be paramount for the agency as we embark on another 60 years of committed service to our communities.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the service of Board Chairperson Rachel Perez who retired at the beginning of 2024. Rachel was passionate about serving her community and stepped into the role of Board Chairperson at a time of uncertainty for the agency. She served with excellence and exemplified what community action is all about. I am extremely grateful to have worked directly with her during the past 4 years and I know that our current Board Chairperson, Melissa Green, and I are committed to carrying on her legacy.

In closing I look with eager anticipation to what the future holds for the agency. In a time of uncertainty I take comfort in knowing that "Diamonds are Forever".

Sincerely,

Opportunities.

William R. Rybczyk President/CEO

# A message from our Board Chairperson



2024 has been a benchmark year for me in my service to New Opportunities, Inc. For nearly a decade I have been a part of a dynamic and engaging Board that is committed to understanding and supporting an agency that impacts tens of thousands of lives on an annual basis. My journey began as part of the Head Start Policy Council and then I transitioned to be an

Early Childhood representative. Three years ago I had the opportunity to become the Vice-Chair of the Board. When Chairperson Rachel Perez announced her retirement I was honored that the Board chose me to serve in the Chairperson's role. I had the opportunity to witness firsthand how Rachel conducted herself and I am privileged to be able to continue on her legacy of service.

In my first year as Chairperson I have had the opportunity to gain both a local and national understanding of the work of New Opportunities and the community action network. This perspective has led me to appreciate even more the work of the agency and the Board and its important role for individuals and families in the communities we serve. I have always been struck by just how much the agency does. There is a such a diverse offering of programs including early childhood, housing assistance, fuel assistance, re-entry services, and senior nutrition services to name just a few. I have also been struck by the agency's willingness to think outside the box with initiatives like the CT Food 4 Thought Hydroponic facility which is creating jobs and generating unrestricted revenue through the production and sales of many different lettuce varieties. This kind of innovation is what has sustained the organization to have a timeless impact over the past 60 years. I am grateful to be a part of such a wonderful Board of Directors and I hold the staff of the agency in the highest esteem. This is not easy work at any level and I am proud of the dedication and commitment of the agency staff.

I look forward to the challenges that lay ahead and I am committed to supporting the work of the agency through advocacy and engagement with all key stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Melissa Green Board Chairperson

### **Board of Directors**

Melissa Green Chairperson

Belinda Weaver Vice-Chairperson

Maritza Rivera Secretary

Victor Lopez Treasurer

Dora Bennett

John Burrus

Rosa Carlascio

Mary A. Conklin

John Davis

Alicia DeBarrows

Cheryl Flanagan

Deneen Fryer

Gaylynn Hadley

**Chelsey Harris** 

Sonya Jelks

Joyce Kennedy Jones

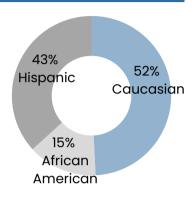
Michelle Saavedra Slappey

# **Our Customers**

### Who we served

24,661 households 51,974 Individuals

# Race and Ethnicity



### Education

49% of customers have a high school or equivalency diploma

20% of customers have pursued and/or obtained a post-secondary education

### Gender



### Age

31% Customers under the age of 18

29% Customers between 25-44

15% Customers between 45-59

25% Customers 60 & older

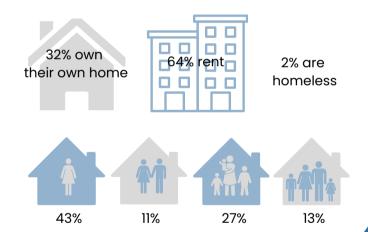
### Sources of Household Income

35% of all households have at least 1 working adult

21% households have a retirement income

62% of all households are living on a total household income that is less than 100% of the federal poverty level

# Housing & Household Characteristics



# Results that matter



#### **EDUCATION:**

**533** children (birth to 5 years olds) enrolled in Early Childhood Education **100%** children enrolled in NOI's Early Childhood Education programs demonstrated skills for school readiness and emergent literacy skills



### EMPLOYMENT:

128 youth worked in summer employment gaining work experience and job skills252 job referrals were made to support adults seeking employment100 adults participated in job readiness training79 unemployed adults obtained employment



### **INCOME & ASSET BUILDING:**

**254** households used the Volunteer Income Tax Preparation (VITA) services **50** individuals invested in their financial security by opening a savings account



### HEALTH & SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT:

2,609 people received home delivered meals allowing them to maintain individual living2,677 people received emergency supplies of food from the food pantry72 individuals participated in classes to improve their parenting skills



### **HOUSING:**

198 individuals experiencing homelessness were placed in safe and temporary shelter48,121 people received energy assistance and stayed warm this winter530 people avoided eviction, while another 68 avoided foreclosure207 obtained safe and affordable housing



#### **VOLUNTEERS:**

Over **96,000** hours were donated to NOI from volunteers. **89%** of those hours are from individuals with low-incomes



Almost  $\bf 52,000$  pounds of lettuce was distributed to emergency shelters and emergency food pantries

Just over **42,000** pounds of lettuce was distributed to 14 school districts and 25 commercial markets throughout the state

# Paying Tribute...



### Meet Jesus "Chu" Lugo...

It was a time when Gerald Ford was President, disco-dancing was the rage, and gas-rationing also had the nation, "raging". That year, 1974, was the backdrop that Jesus "Chu" Lugo began his 50-year tenure, as one of New Opportunities' most productive and respected employees. Chu logged distinguished terms in a variety of agency services, such as the South End Center and OIC, before he helped launch a new agency service called the Energy Assistance Division at New Opportunities.

Chu's compassionate client care quickly established our Energy Assistance Program as one of the most efficient and effective fuel-assistance services in Connecticut. He has helped develop and establish standards that have become best practices in social service and private agencies throughout the Northeast.

Chu became the heart and soul of New Opportunities' Energy Services for hundreds of thousands who invested their needs in his competent and attentive skills. Clients and our employees now consider him the contact point of hope when fuel shortfalls become household realities.

We see and hear Chu's successes when we speak with our energy clients who express their gratitude for his assistance, while speaking of him as a personal friend. We see Chu's success in their eyes and feel it in the handshakes of thanks. Chu Lugo's talents are only exceeded by the size of his heart, which is truly the centerpiece of his success.



### Meet Rachel Perez...

Rachel came to the United States in the early 1940's, moving with her parents and siblings to New York. Growing up in Brooklyn during the 40s and 50's was incredibly difficult for a non-English speaker especially as a Puerto Rican, but Rachel learned from her father the drive to focus on learning the language, eventually graduating with her Nursing certificate. After working in hospitals for a few years she furthered her education at New York University, graduating with a Nursing Degree and was recognized as the only Latina in her class.

Rachel met her husband who had just joined the US Army and was able to join him in Germany, where she was highly sought after due to her ability to speak not only Spanish

and English, but also Portuguese and Dutch German. She served as a Civilian Nurse at USAG Kaiserslautern Army Base.

Rachel's faith has always been at the forefront in all of her actions, and she has always been very open and honest in helping and serving others. While serving in Germany, and later in Washington State at Fort Lewis, Rachel has always helped others around her, and helped raise and guide women during the 1960's and 1970's into a growing awareness of their abilities and gifts that they had within them. Using her own testimony, she strongly believes in lifting and empowering women.

When Rachel moved to Waterbury in 1971, she was able to find employment at Waterbury Hospital, working within their Chase Clinic, adjacent to Emergency Services. Her service with the Hispanic Coalition and the shelters in town brought her to the attention of then Waterbury Mayor Victor Mambruno, who asked her to assist in bridging the significant gap between the City and the Hispanic community.

To this day, Rachel continues to serve, having survived Leukemia. She served as the Chairperson of the Board of New Opportunities, Inc. for 4 decades, and is the Agency's Board Chairperson Emerita. She continues working as a medical translator for non-English speaking patients and a translator for a number of local attorneys.

# Alice's journey...

My name is Alice and I came to New Opportunities Torrington after being referred by DCF. My life has been one big downhill ride and I needed a change, but also guidance. After receiving assistance and guidance from a family development specialist, I was able to go uphill. This is my story of past struggles and now accomplishments.

I had lost my children to DCF after a domestic issue at home and I had to leave as well. I was fighting tooth and nail to find an affordable home where I could root myself as well as prove that I had a new stable home for my children. Given everything I was going through my employer had me on leave because I was continuously missing work and I didn't have enough money saved for a security deposit. Not having enough money diminished any hope I had to have my kids back home with me.

DCF then referred me to New Opportunities in Torrington and I was able to work with a family development specialist who worked hard to find housing in the area near my work. After finding housing, this specialist not only worked hard to find enough funding for my security deposit, but also for my first month's rent. I will never be able to repay the help that was provided for my housing. The specialist also referred me to an organization that gives free/discounted furniture to needy families. I was able to set up a proper home to await the arrival of my children.

My employer allowed me to go back to work and I was able to start saving money for rent. My life started to really turn around and I was referred to a therapist for my mental health by my case manager. After a couple months I was final able to obtain my children back in my home.

I feel that none of this would have been possible or if not, as fast, if it wasn't for the help and guidance of New Opportunities Torrington. Thank you for all the help you have given me.



### Carol Ann's contribution...

For almost 8 years Carol Ann has been a senior volunteer spending her time in a classroom at a Charter School in Waterbury. The classroom teacher wishes Carol Ann could volunteer more days because her presence makes such a difference in her classroom. "Not only is she punctual and reliable, her exceptional organizational skills make her an invaluable asset to our daily activities. Carol Ann goes above and beyond in every aspect of her role, whether it's assisting with tasks, tutoring students, or participating in recess activities".

Carol Ann is thought of as a positive and patient energy that creates a nurturing environment that the children thrive in. "The entire class adores her, and her dedication is truly inspiring." While the children and teacher are so grateful for her commitment and the love she brings to their learning community, Carol Ann enjoys spending time there and being able to make a difference.





# Sean's story of resilience, growth and determination...

Facing the challenges of a criminal background, Sean was determined to break free from the cycle of his past and build a future he could be proud of. With unwavering commitment, not only did he stay out of trouble with the law but also took bold steps toward personal and professional growth. Today, Sean is successfully enrolled in HVAC training, equipping himself with valuable skills for a stable career. Alongside his education, Sean is employed full-time, demonstrating dedication and responsibility in every aspect of his life.

A significant milestone is now on the horizon—Sean is set to secure his very own apartment, a testament to his hard work and perseverance. Throughout his journey, NOI has been a steady and reliable resource, providing support, guidance, and encouragement every step of the way. Sean's success is not just his own; it's an inspiration to everyone striving to overcome their circumstances. His story proves that with determination, support, and opportunity, change is not only possible—it's achievable.

Aida's new outlook...

"The Conexión has helped go out more, make more friendships, talk with more people, not be enclosed in the house. The cooking classes have helped me in my nutrition, in how I manage my medical conditions and diabetes. Because of these classes, my health has improved significantly. Many of the classes have been informational, like the computer classes which teach us how to use Word and Power Point. Both physically and mentally, I have become active and happy due to this program. The transportation provided is another important factor of this program, it helps bring us seniors to the classes that this program hosts and for those who have no way of commuting. Also, the meals that this program offers are a blessing, they really help us a lot.





# Gloria's gratitude...

"Thank you for hiring Henry Negron, Meals on Wheels delivery man, who possibly saved my life. On November 4, 2024, I fell and fortunately for me, shortly thereafter, Mr. Negron arrived at my house to deliver my meal. I called out through the door and told him I fell and could not get up. Not only did he call an ambulance, but he stayed and talked to me the entire time as I was afraid and helpless on the floor."

"We talk about how people don't care anymore and how bad it is, but my angel, Henry Negron, not only cares about people, but he went above and beyond to help this 86-yearold lady when she was helpless. Who knows what could have happened to me; thankfully, Mr. Negron was there. He definitely is a hero an deserves to be recognized."

### In remembrance...



Ms. Thelma Williams

Thelma Williams spent over four decades in service to New Opportunities, Inc. She held so many different titles during her tenure that she basically impacted every aspect of the day to day operations of the organization. Thelma was a part of launching many of the initiatives that the agency currently offers for seniors. She was committed to serving her community and could always be seen with a smile on her face. Still working in her 80's, she was one of the most tireless workers ever encountered. The respect she commanded and the esteem that she was held in was unparalleled. Thelma developed long lasting friendships with many of her colleagues across the agency and she will be sorely missed by all of us.



Margaret worked for the agency for nearly 15 years in both the Executive and Early Childhood departments. In those capacities she handled numerous administrative tasks to support the day to day operations of agency programming. Margaret was always seen with a smile on her face and a warm greeting. Anyone engaging with Margaret who was looking for information regarding agency activities was always met with care and compassion. Margaret was involved with the agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. She assisted with the scheduling and gave of her time as the intake/greeter for the program on many Monday & Wednesday evenings as well as Saturday mornings. The staff, volunteers, as well as the thousands of customers served by the site were blessed by Margaret's involvement.



Ms. Margaret Toms



Few Connecticut leaders have provided more hearths and homes for Connecticut's low-income residents than Ernest Mosley. After a successful teaching career, Mr. Mosley was the Deputy Director for Model Cities for the City of Waterbury, various housing programs in Waterbury and Bridgeport, and served as a



Mr. Ernest Mosley

Financial Analyst for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, before being named Connecticut's Deputy Housing Commissioner under Governor Lowell Weicker. He was a member of Omega PSI Phi Fraternity. Despite his exhausting schedule, Mr. Mosley also held leadership roles with a long list of Connecticut's social service groups that included New Opportunities, Inc. where he oversaw the North Square Housing program.

Ernest was the strategist and tactician for his brother's election to the 72nd District of the CT General Assembly. If charity begins at home, Ernest Mosley provided the breeding ground of charity for thousands.

# **Our Services**

# **Community Services**

**Operation Pantry** 

Volunteer Income Tax Preparation (VITA)

### Early Childhood Development

Infant and Toddler Care

School Readiness

### **Employment Services**

Connecticut Center for Advanced Rehabilitative

**Employment Services (CARES)** 

CARES - LEVEL UP

Connecticut Manufacturing Assistance Center (C-MAC)

### **Energy Services**

Assurance 16

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Operation Fuel

Western Area Agency on Aging Elderly Fuel Program

**Utility Mediation** 

### **Housing Services**

**Bishop House** 

Freedom Walk

Meriden Supportive Housing

Middlesex, Meriden, Wallingford Coordinated Access

Network (MMW CAN)

New Beginnings Emergency Shelter and Hospitality Center

North Square Gateway

Rapid Re-housing

### Individual & Family Empowerment

Family Development Center

Access Health Navigator Program

**Building Healthy Communities** 

Case Management Services

Community Health Workers

Covered CT

Diaper Bank

First Time Home Buyers Program

MyHomeCT

**Project Longevity** 

**SNAP Outreach** 

Rental Assistance

Fatherhood - Meriden & Waterbury

### Senior Services

Adult Diaper Bank

**Americorps Senior Companion** 

In-Home Services

**CHORE** 

Homemaker

Companion

Emergency Response System (Voice-Care)

Foster Grandparents

Money Management

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

Senior Nutrition

Animeals

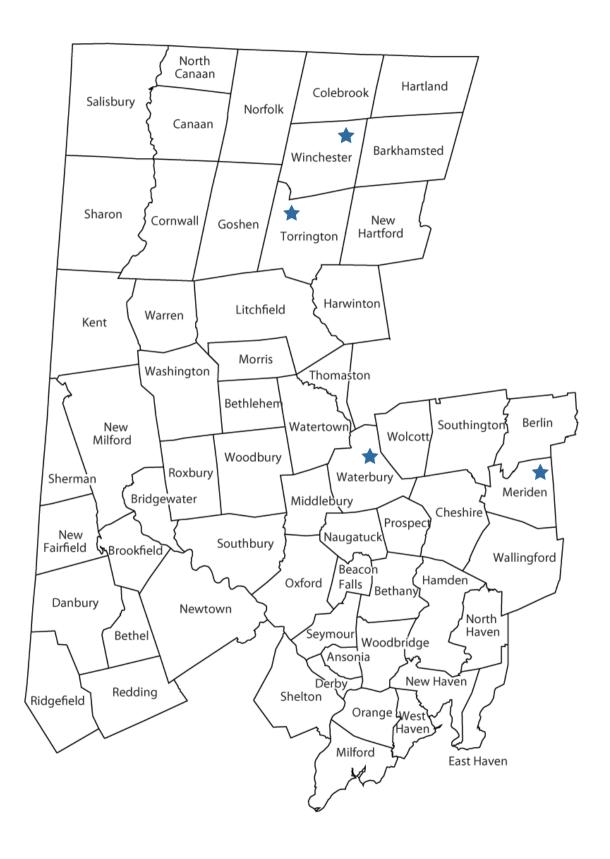
Conexion

Meals on Wheels

Senior Cafe



New Opportunities, Inc. proudly delivers programs and services to 60 Connecticut towns and cities located throughout New Haven, Middlesex, Litchfield, and Fairfield Counties.



# **New Opportunities Locations**

### **Full Service locations**

Dr. James H. Gatling Human Service Center 232 North Elm Street Waterbury, CT 06702 203.579.9799

New Opportunities of Greater Torrington 62 Commercial Boulevard Torrington, CT 06790 860.482.9749

New Opportunities of Greater Meriden 22 Church Street Meriden, CT 06451 203.639.6050

### Residential Facilities

Bishop House 31 Bishop Street Waterbury, CT 06704 203.236.9990

New Beginnings Emergency Shelter & Hospitality Center 43 St. Casimir Drive Meriden, CT 06540 203.634.1734

Patricia A. Mayfield CT Food 4 Thought Hydroponic Center 360 Technology Park Drive Torrington, CT 06790

### Satellite Offices

Winchester Energy Services Office 716 Main Street Winsted, CT 06098 860.738.9138 Hours: Seasonal - call first

Muriel H. Moore Child Development Center 444 North Main Street Waterbury, CT 06702 203.759.0841

North Square Gateway 15 Bishop Street Waterbury, CT 06704 203.805.4421

New Opportunities:

:newoppinc.org

? :newopportunitiesinc

:newopportunitiesinc

**X** :newoppincorg

CT Food 4 Thought:

:ctfood4thought.org

f :ctfood4thought

ictf4t

X :ctfood4thought



# **NOI Supporters**

### Federal Funding Sources

Corporation for National and Community Services

U.S. Department of Agriculture

• Lead State Agency - CT Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Energy, Administration for Community Living

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

- Administration for Community Living
- Community Services Block Grant; Lead State Agency CT State Dept. of Social Services
- Energy Assistance Block Grant; Lead State Agency CT State Dept. of Social Services
- Child Care Development Block Grant Lead State Agency CT Office of Early Childhood
- Social Service Block Grant; Lead State Agency CT State Dept. of Social Services

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

• Continuum of Care U.S. Department of Labor

### State Funding Sources

CT Health and Educational Facilities Authority

CT Housing and Finance Authority

Department of Aging and Disability Services

Department of Children and Families

Department of Correction Department of Housing Department of Public Health

Department of Rehabilitative Services

Department of Social Services
Office of Early Childhood
Office of Health Strategy
State Department of Education
State of CT Judicial Branch

Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA)

### **Municipalities Supporting Senior Nutrition**

Borough of Naugatuck Town of New Fairfield City of Waterbury Town of New Milford Town of Beacon Falls Town of Prospect town of Bethlehem Town of Southbury Town of Thomaston Town of Bethel Town of Brookfield Town of Watertown Town of Cheshire Town of Wolcott Town of Middlebury Town of Woodbury

Special thanks to our "Buy a Wheel" campaign supporters, New Morning Market (Woodbury), Adams (Thomaston and Watertown), LaBonne's (Watertown, Prospect, and Woodbury), and Walshes Market.

### **Corporate Supporters**

Borghesi Building Engineering

Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey

Cornerstone Church (Oxford) General Technology Group

Ives Bank

Montagno Construction New Tech Haven LLC NSD Partners LLC

Thomaston Savings Bank

**USA Mechanical** 

UBS Financial Services Inc. USI Insurance Services Zion Baptist Church

### Other Supporters

Access Health CT

Bank of America - Lena Benas Memorial Fund

City of Meriden

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nc.

Connecticut Community Foundation Connecticut Health Foundation

Cuno Foundation ION Bank Foundation James H. Napier Foundation KeyBank Foundation

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

M&T Bank Foundation Meals on Wheels America Meriden Foundation

Meriden-Wallingford Community Foundation

Northwest CT Community Foundation

Operation Fuel

The Housing Collective

The Justice Education Center, Inc. Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation Torrington Savings Bank Foundation United Way of Greater Waterbury

Webster Bank Foundation