

Press Release

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Chrysalis Center Hosts 6th Annual Reentry Fair for Returning Citizens

Hartford- Chrysalis Center along with the Greater Hartford Reentry Council and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, hosted its 6th Annual Hartford Employment and Resource Fair; an event that caters to giving access to employment opportunities for returning citizens. The event was held at the Marriott Downtown in Hartford, and was an informative and inspirational session for the 350 vendors, organizations, and guests whom were present for the day's event.

The fair began with a few opening remarks from Judith Rozie-Battle, Senior Vice President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving followed by a panel of influential local business and political figures that have played key roles in striving for reform in hiring practices in Connecticut for persons with criminal backgrounds. Amongst the panelists were City of Hartford Mayor, Luke Bronin; John Santa, former CEO of Santa Energy; State Representative Brandon McGee Jr.; Cheryl McDonald, co-owner of Bear's Smokehouse BBQ; Louis Lista of the Zest 280 and Pond House Café restaurants; Sue Gunderman of the STRIDE Program; and Daryl McGraw of DHMAS.

Panelists gave testimonials of their work in assisting persons with reforming their lives whether those individuals had been previously incarcerated or were released and struggling with adjusting back into society. "We need to realize that good people do bad things," said John Santa. "The fact that you made mistakes shouldn't mean that you need to pay for it the rest of your life."

With many of the panelists being business owners who hire returning citizens, several experiences were shared in an effort to shatter the stigma behind hiring such persons. "Our first two employees had criminal backgrounds," said Cheryl Underwood. "We don't discriminate because we couldn't have started Bear's without them."

After the panel discussion, organizations and vendors met with several patrons in search of employment and resources that would connect them to employment at the exhibition. Several on-the-spot interviews took place along with instant hiring from several of the organizations.

Chrysalis Center is a private, non-profit, socially innovative multiservice organization that serves individuals and families living in Connecticut. (www.ChrysalisCenterCT.org)
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