

Connecticut Housing Finance Authority
Building Community Through the Housing Authority Resident Program
Special Needs Housing / Housing for Persons with Special Needs

| Overview

Across Connecticut, [more than 22,000 older adults and adults living with disabilities live in state-supported housing](#). For many, that housing provides stability — but not connection. Isolation, limited mobility, and gaps in supportive services are challenges that bricks and mortar alone cannot solve.

In Fall 2024, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) launched the Housing Authority Resident Program (HARP) to address exactly that gap. With a \$1 million commitment -- distributed as \$250,000 annually over four years -- HARP provides flexible grants of up to \$10,000 per single property with a cap of \$20,000 per state sponsored Housing Authority. These funds help housing authorities design and deliver social, wellness, and educational programming tailored to their residents' needs and interests. The goal is straightforward but powerful: to help transform housing from a place to live into a place of belonging, enrichment, as well as connection to their community.

| Responding to an Important Housing Need

Research consistently shows that social isolation poses serious risks to the health and well-being of older adults, [comparable in effect to smoking and physical inactivity](#). Yet many housing authorities, particularly smaller ones, operate with lean budgets that leave little room for the programming that could make a meaningful difference in residents' daily lives.

State-sponsored housing in Connecticut serves a population that is disproportionately vulnerable: older adult residents managing chronic health conditions, adults with disabilities navigating daily living challenges, and individuals who may have limited social networks outside their housing community. Service-enriched housing has demonstrated improved outcomes for these populations, but access to such services has historically depended on the size and resources of the housing authority, leaving smaller authorities and their residents behind.

HARP was designed to close that gap, giving housing authorities of all sizes the resources to meet their residents where they are.

| Program Design and Innovation

HARP's central innovation is intentional flexibility. Rather than prescribing a menu of approved services, CHFA provides housing authorities with the resources and the trust to design programming that reflects what their residents actually need. Eligible activities span three broad areas -- educational, social and recreational, and health and wellness -- but the design decisions are left to those closest to the community.

This resident-centered model stands in contrast to more top-down approaches that can produce programming that is technically compliant but poorly matched to local needs. By stepping back from program design and focusing on enabling capacity, CHFA allows housing authorities to function as genuine community anchors rather than simply property managers.

No two participating housing authorities have used HARP funding the same way, which is precisely the point. The East Windsor Housing Authority offers a vivid example of what that flexibility looks like in practice. HARP funding there has supported:

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- Community meals and seasonal gatherings
- Nutrition classes and cooking demonstrations
- Art classes and creative programming
- On-site personal care services, including haircuts
- Pet pantry support
- Community space enhancements

At the Rocky Hill Housing Authority, HARP took a different shape entirely across its two properties (70 units, 73 residents). Funding supported community space renovations like new furniture, televisions, and computers, alongside a Computer 101 class offered in partnership with the local library; a Tea Party; a breakfast club; Zen and memory hour; and various holiday events. Crucially, the Rocky Hill Tenant Participation Committee took a lead role in planning and organizing programming with meetings drawing an average of 25 attendees across the two properties, an example of HARP fostering not just resident participation, but resident agency.

None of these programs are large-scale or logistically complex, but each one was chosen because it responds to something residents at East Windsor and Rocky Hill actually wanted. That alignment between program design and resident preference is precisely what HARP's flexible model is built to produce.

| Measurable Impact and Outcomes

Since its Fall 2024 launch, HARP has funded programming at 28 properties across 13 housing authorities statewide, reaching 1,641 residents across 1,384 units. To date, nearly \$143,000 has been awarded with an additional \$40,000 committed to two housing authorities currently in the pipeline, bringing total Year 1 investment to more than \$182,000. Grantees have collectively delivered 68 funded programs: 22 educational, 27 health and wellness, and 19 social and recreational. Program formats ranged from single events to weekly or bi-monthly series, meaning the actual number of resident engagement opportunities far exceeds the program count alone.

At the East Windsor Housing Authority (91 residents in 84 units), HARP funding supported ten distinct programs in its first year, a level of programming breadth that would not have been possible within existing operating budgets. At a property of just 91 residents, seasonal gatherings drew between 37 and 47 attendees each, and the haircut program reached 50 residents over the grant year — suggesting consistent, broad-based participation across the community.

The program has also surfaced an important secondary benefit: it is changing how housing authorities think about their role. Rather than approaching resident services as an occasional add-on, participating authorities are developing more intentional, ongoing programming calendars -- a shift in orientation that is likely to outlast any individual grant cycle.

| Impact on Residents

The most direct measure of HARP's success is what residents themselves report. At East Windsor, residents described the community meals as generating a “wonderful social ripple,” transforming brief hallway exchanges into genuine neighborly relationships. Others noted that regular

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programming has given them “a reason to get out and engage,” with meaningful effects on mood, motivation, and mental well-being.

Residents were consistent in emphasizing that even modest services carry significance well beyond their practical value. Access to these amenities communicates that residents are seen, that their comfort and dignity matter, and that their housing community is invested in their quality of life.

| Effective Use of Resources and Partnerships

HARP demonstrates how targeted, modest investments can produce outsized impact when they are directed at the right level of the system. By channeling funding directly to housing authorities rather than through intermediary service providers, CHFA minimizes administrative overhead and maximizes the share of each dollar that reaches residents.

Housing authorities, in turn, leverage existing relationships with local businesses, nonprofits, and service organizations to extend the reach of HARP funding well beyond its face value. At East Windsor, a \$10,000 grant supported ten programs, an efficiency that reflects both the flexibility of the model and the resourcefulness of local partners. This lean model ensures that the vast majority of every grant dollar flows directly to resident programming rather than administration — a meaningful feature for a program operating at modest scale.

| Replicability

HARP offers a straightforward and highly adaptable model for other HFAs. Its core design -- flexible per-property grants, local decision-making authority, and a broad eligibility framework -- requires no enabling legislation and scales readily across portfolio sizes and community contexts. Notably, eligible uses now include resident service coordinator training and professional membership costs up to \$2,000 per grant. This ensures that housing authority staff stay current on best practices and can bring that knowledge directly to residents long after individual programs conclude.

The model is particularly well-suited to HFAs working with smaller, geographically dispersed properties that lack the scale to sustain robust resident services independently — where a modest, predictable grant can be the difference between a community with meaningful programming and one without.

CHFA is glad to share program guidelines, grant application materials, and early implementation learnings with any HFA interested in adapting the HARP model.

| Conclusion

The Housing Authority Resident Program reflects a simple but consequential insight: that the work of supporting residents does not end when the lease is signed. For Connecticut's 22, older adults and people living with disabilities, the quality of daily life -- the opportunities for connection, activity, and dignity -- is shaped as much by what happens inside their community as by the roof over their heads. Through flexible, resident-centered investments, CHFA has given housing authorities the tools to address that reality. HARP is still in its early years, but its impact is already visible: in the participation numbers, in the programming calendars, and in the words of residents who describe their communities as places where they are not just housed, but genuinely at home.



CHFA's Housing Authority Resident Program (HARP) is making everyday life better for residents. *(Interview with Rocky Hill Housing Authority Executive Director)*

HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENT PROGRAM

AWARD CATEGORIES

Educational

Social & Recreational

Health & Wellness

HARP: A Conversation with East Windsor Housing Authority Executive Director



HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENT PROGRAM

CHFA's Housing Authority Resident Program (HARP) provides funding to support resident-focused initiatives.



OVERVIEW

Eligible Housing Authorities within the State-Sponsored Housing Portfolio that meet CHFA program requirements may apply for awards ranging from: \$1,000–\$10,000 per property with a maximum ask of \$20,000 per Housing Authority annually.

NEW IN 2026

HARP now features a streamlined application process and expanded resident-focused opportunities, including Resident Service Coordinator (RSC) training. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis.

LEARN MORE

CHFA will be rolling out the new and improved process at the CONN-NAHRO Small Public Housing Authority (PHA) virtual meeting on Thursday, March 12th. For more details contact Karen Futoma.

AWARD CATEGORIES



EDUCATIONAL



**SOCIAL &
RECREATIONAL**



**HEALTH &
WELLNESS**

HOW TO APPLY

To get started, download the application workbook [here](#).
Please note, there are new tabs to guide you through the process.



Karen Futoma
Resident Services Specialist



For all questions:
karen.futoma@chfa.org



For application submissions:
chfashp-2@chfa.org



From: Sherry Bradley <sbjustin1@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2026 6:16 PM
To: ewha1966@gmail.com
Subject: Revised testimonial

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and energy that Marisa Prior and the office staff at Park Hill put into activities for our community.

I am hoping that these programs or new ones like them may continue. For example:

Luncheons: These luncheons were great. It's nice to break bread with old neighbors and to meet new ones. I love that we get out and socialize. There is always a lot of laughter. I like that Marisa supports local businesses (Maneeley's and BB BBQ) for these events. And also a plus, the food was delicious. I have attend all.

Painting: OMG I just absolutely look forward to doing this activity when we have it. The instructions for this class are as slow or fast as needed. There is so much laughter over our interpretations of the "theme" or lack of painting skills. When we are creating, there is light chatter, banter and advice on how each of us are doing. I have attended all but one of these sessions. I look forward to this or some other craft/projects.

Cooking demonstrations with nutritionist Jackie: I just love this program. Having a live event gives you so many opportunities to learn something new like budget shopping, cooking tips, and healthier options. If you have certain health issues like diabetes, heart issues or allergies you can get tips what to eat or not eat that may help your condition. Best part is eating the prepared food. There are printed copies of the recipe(s) to take home with you. I have cooked 90% of them. To date I have attended all of these classes and look forward to continuing.

New furniture: With new furniture, Marisa has created a warm, comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. I enjoy that we can gather in a home like environment and use the smart TV for all kinds of activities like listening to music, or just watching a movie. Its another great way to "get out" and enjoy time with fellow tenants/friends.

In closing, programs like these are very important in helping to keep residents engaged with each other, healthier mental states and just getting out.

Sherry Bradley
73 Park Hill
Broad Brook, CT 06016

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

Yolanda Cruz
60 Park Hill, Broad Brook, CT 06016

February 20, 2026

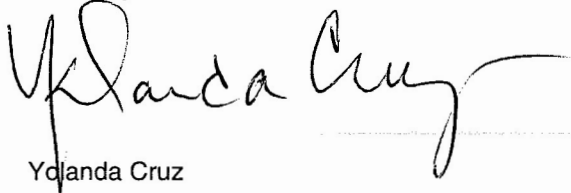
To Whom It May Concern at CHFA,

I would like to sincerely thank you for funding the East Windsor Housing Authority programs. Because of your generous support, I, along with many of my neighbors, have had the opportunity to get out of the house, socialize, and participate in enjoyable activities such as painting and sharing a lovely lunch together.

These gatherings have meant so much to us. They have given us a chance to connect, laugh, and simply enjoy each other's company. For me personally—and I am sure for many of my neighbors as well—this has been incredibly beneficial to our mental well-being. Having something positive to look forward to and a reason to get out and engage with others truly makes a meaningful difference.

Thank you again for your generosity and for investing in programs that bring our community together. Your support truly enhances the quality of life for residents like myself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yolanda Cruz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Yolanda Cruz

Chérie M. Martyn
84 Park Hill
Broad Brook, CT 06016-9740

February 17, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I'd like to express a sincere thank you for the luncheon program that the East Windsor Housing Authority was able to provide Park Hill residents last year. Not only were the luncheons absolutely delicious; and were a delight to attend; they also created a wonderful social ripple within our community.

Being a Park Hill resident for 23 years, and now its Tenant Association's president, many residents have shared the positive effects that this grant has had upon us, it was profound. Enough so, it would feel remiss to refrain from relaying this information forward to those that put in the time and effort to create the luncheon grant program. You deserve to know how you've positively touched people's lives.

Our Executive Director, Marisa Prior, utilized the grant funds so wisely in so many ways. Each meal's atmosphere in our Community Hall was refreshingly distinct in their presentations. Many residents commented on how nice it was to eat a meal on such thoughtful placesettings. That may sound like entertainment minutia, but it made for us to feel that we were indeed important enough for that detail to be considered.

And the food Oh goodness, it was so delicious, every time! We enjoyed the variety of menus from the different caterers that Ms. Prior chose. The office staff's sincere cheerful service made us feel so appreciated. Also, we got an absolute kick out of knowing the grant funds were affording us residents to be a part of supporting our local businesses!

Many of us here in Park Hill live alone. Getting to share a meal with someone else often helps ease the pangs from the loneliness that can set in from regularly eating meals alone. Sadly, possibly because of this, the old social pattern here has been for folks to attend a holiday meal at the Hall and then leave within minutes after they were done eating.

It is my belief that the continuity of these luncheons has afforded our residents to become more familiar with one another. They got to meet residents that they normally wouldn't have set out to get to know — so they started to stay and socialize longer after each meal. And then as they shared what a wonderful time they had, attendance stayed steady and it actually grew!

In closing, this may well be the most profound impact that the luncheon grant program has had. Because the luncheons were able to take place on a regular basis, I've seen more residents become more neighbors. They're now socializing on their own. We're becoming a thriving community!

Thank you so much for constructively contributing to this community's well-being.

Chérie M. Martyn
PHTA President