



January 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Blake (Our Piece of the Pie)
(860)761-7370
Lauren.Blake@opp.org

Hartford, CT.... Our Piece of the Pie® (OPP®), a leading youth development agency in Hartford, will coordinate Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day service projects and events along with several community partners next week. OPP has received an MLK Day of Service Planning Grant funded by Youth Service America through The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). OPP, Hands On Hartford, Connecticut Center for Nonviolence, Public Allies Connecticut, and other partners have worked collaboratively to organize, support, and track service events in the Hartford-New Haven-Waterbury region. OPP will be distributing a limited amount of mini-grants to support the purchase of service project supplies.

The Beloved Community Peace Vigil, one of the major celebrations, will take place at 5PM on January 16th at the Charter Oak Cultural Center. OPP, Hands On Hartford, and Connecticut Center for Nonviolence will host this event with the theme "Give a Can, Get a Candle." To receive a candle for the vigil, volunteers will be asked to bring a non-perishable food item or personal care items. Community choirs will perform Civil Rights Era songs and Dr. King's teachings will be presented in multiple forms of artistic expression. Volunteers will pack and deliver care packages to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday is recognized on January 16th. This day and the weekend prior provide an opportunity for Americans to honor Dr. King's legacy through service. The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, and creates solutions to social problems. "This is a wonderful way for our young people to be Ambassadors of the City," said OPP's President & CEO, Bob Rath, "They become engaged in their community and build a brighter future for their neighbors and for themselves."

OPP, based in Hartford, helps urban youth ages 14-24 earn economic independence through education and employment programs. OPP's cornerstone program Pathways to Success matches each young person with a Youth Development Specialist (YDS) who serves as a mentor and helps the youth establish a concrete plan for the future. A crucial component in youth success has been identified through fulfillment of community service and engagement in service learning activities. In Pathways, each youth has the long-term goals of a college degree or vocational certification and/or employment in that young person's chosen field.

####