

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN ACTION CELEBRATES 150 YEARS OF  
INSPIRING HOPE AND TRANSFORMING LIVES**

*From the Gilded Age to Today: A Legacy of Advocacy,  
Innovation, and Second Chances in Criminal Justice*

**Hartford, CT (January 29, 2025):** Community Partners in Action (CPA), one of the nation's oldest criminal justice organizations, proudly marks its 150th anniversary on January 30, 2025. **Founded in 1875 as the Prisoner's Friends' Society (PFS)**, and later known as the **Connecticut Prison Association**, CPA has been a driving force for change, dedicated to improving lives and transforming the criminal justice system. To mark the milestone year, CPA has planned several events, including an Evening at Hartford's Reentry Welcome Center (January 23), Reentry Resource Fairs in Hartford and Waterbury in April, and a 150<sup>th</sup> Gala at Hartford's Society Room on September 18.

Established in response to the harsh treatment and deplorable conditions at the Wethersfield State Prison, **CPA's founders included Charles Dudley Warner, co-owner of the *Hartford Courant*, with Mark Twain serving as an advisor.** Together, they co-authored *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, reflecting their shared commitment to social reform.

When the Prisoner's Friends' Society was formed, it was one of only five states in which an association had been founded specifically to provide services to adult prison inmates. Its Articles of Association contained five "objects" or goals for the organization:

- To benefit society by the reformation of criminals,
- To assist prisoners in the work of self-reform,
- To promote reformatory systems of Prison Management,
- To aid discharged convicts in living honorably, and
- To cooperate in the repression of crime.

"As we celebrate 150 years, we reflect on a legacy built on compassion, innovation, and advocacy," said **Beth Hines, Executive Director of Community Partners in Action.** "While we celebrate this historic milestone and remain steadfast in our commitment to building brighter futures for all, we also recognize that our work continues to be critical in addressing systemic challenges, supporting the most vulnerable populations, and empowering individuals to create new paths forward.

**Governor Ned Lamont recognized Community Partners in Action's vital contributions:** "CPA's enduring commitment to justice reform and community well-being has transformed countless lives over its 150-year history. As one of the oldest criminal justice organizations in the nation, CPA has continually

adapted to meet evolving challenges while remaining steadfast in its mission to foster hope and second chances. Their work in prevention, reentry, and alternatives to incarceration is essential to creating safer, stronger communities across Connecticut, and I appreciate their partnership in these efforts. I congratulate this organization on their 150-year anniversary and wish them many more years of success here in Connecticut.”

**Angel Quiros, Commissioner of the Department of Correction**, remarked: "As we celebrate Community Partners in Action’s 150th anniversary, we acknowledge its profound and historic contributions to the evolution of corrections in Connecticut. CPA’s work predates the Department of Correction and was instrumental in shaping its formation and the search for its first Commissioner in the 1960s. CPA remains a trusted partner, working collaboratively with the DOC to promote rehabilitation, and reduce recidivism. This milestone anniversary is a testament to CPA’s unwavering commitment to improving the lives of justice-involved individuals.

**Gary Roberge, Executive Director of the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division**, praised CPA’s longstanding partnership with the state: “Community Partners in Action has been a valued partner of the Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division for decades, providing essential services that offer alternatives to incarceration and foster successful reentry. Through programs like REGIONS, CPA delivers critical therapeutic support and life skills for youth, helping to reduce risk factors and divert them from the adult justice system. Their youth enrichment initiatives in juvenile residential centers further empower young people with tools for personal growth and resilience. We are proud to celebrate this historic milestone with CPA and continue our collaboration to strengthen communities across Connecticut.”

It is no surprise states across the U.S. continue to focus on criminal justice reform, and that the need for effective reentry services has never been more pressing. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of individuals released from prison are rearrested within three years, highlighting the ongoing challenges in ensuring successful reintegration. Additionally, research from the National Institute of Justice also emphasizes that tailored programs addressing specific needs, such as housing, employment, and mental health, are crucial to reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for those reentering society.

Community Partners in Action has long been at the forefront of addressing these challenges, adapting its programs to meet the evolving needs of individuals who are justice-impacted. As the late **former CPA executive director Gordon S. Bates** wrote in his book *Consistency, Creativity, and Commitment, The Story of Community Partners in Action 1875-2015*:

In each generation, CPA has met the challenges of its era successfully, expanding far beyond its original charge of helping individual ex-prisoners. Flexibility and adaptability have been bywords of the agency in each decade. When new policies were needed, CPA has either written legislation or supported bills written by others to move the state forward. When programs were needed to assist prisoners, CPA was amongst the first to discern how best to respond or collaborate with other agencies to develop a range of services.

When Connecticut found itself in a prison overcrowding crisis from 1984 to 1990, CPA was the first to suggest a program that satisfied all sides of the argument about how to resolve it. That ability to adjust to the needs of the time, in terms of policies and programs, will continue to permit CPA to survive and thrive no matter what the problems facing the state or the agency. (p. vii)

**Why Our Work Matters to Connecticut: Measurable Impact (2019–2023)**

Community Partners in Action’s measurable impact over the past five years demonstrates the life-changing difference these programs make for individuals who are justice-impacted and their families. Through innovative approaches and collaborative efforts, CPA has helped thousands of people secure housing, education, and employment, while fostering personal growth and reducing recidivism. These successes illustrate why comprehensive reentry services are essential to creating safer communities and offering second chances.

- 21,752 adults and youth served across various programs.
- 16,719 individuals in our programs and the community received housing and basic needs support.
- 53,800 Community Service hours completed by participants in the Community Court program.
- 1,722 individuals secured employment, educational opportunities, or career advancements.
- 2,630 unique works of art created in our nationally renowned Prison Arts Program, fostering personal growth and transformation.

**A Legacy of Leadership and Innovation**

Throughout its rich history, CPA has championed reform, introduced innovative programs, and fostered partnerships that have impacted thousands of lives across Connecticut. Some notable milestones include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1917:</b> Advocated for the establishment of a separate women’s prison, which opened in 1921.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1968:</b> Supported the creation of the Connecticut Department of Correction and led search for its first commissioner, addressing overcrowding and facility conditions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1978:</b> Launched the nationally acclaimed Prison Arts Program.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1981:</b> Developed the first community-based Pre-Trial Diversion Program, leading to the creation of Alternative Incarceration Centers (AICs) statewide.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1994:</b> Opened the Resettlement Program for Women, CPA’s first reentry initiative.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1997:</b> Rebranded as Community Partners in Action, reflecting broader goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2018 &amp; 2021:</b> Opened Reentry Welcome Centers in Hartford and Waterbury.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2020:</b> Established two REGIONS programs (Hamden and Hartford) for male youth, focusing on reducing their risk of entering the adult criminal justice system through therapeutic programming.</li> </ul>

**Comprehensive Programs and Services**

At the heart of Community Partners in Action’s mission is a holistic approach to supporting individuals who are justice-impacted through every stage of their journey. From providing safe, supportive housing to delivering innovative reentry services and offering enrichment programs that foster personal growth,

CPA’s programs address the critical needs of adults and youth alike. These comprehensive services not only help reduce recidivism but also empower participants to build brighter futures for themselves and their communities:

- **Residential Services:** Mart’s House (for women), Gordon’s Place (for men), Transitional Housing, Work Release, REGIONS residential programs for male youth.
- **Reentry Services:** Hartford Reentry Welcome Center, Waterbury Reentry Welcome Center, WE RISE Together, and Pathway Home.
- **Alternatives to Incarceration:** Alternative in the Community (AIC) programs, Community Service at Hartford Community Court, Early Screening & Intervention, Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative.
- **Enrichment Programs:** Prison Arts Program, Juvenile Detention Enrichment Program.

**“150 Years of Inspiring Hope”**

As Community Partners in Action celebrates 150 years of service and advocacy, this milestone is an opportunity to reflect on its rich history and continued commitment to justice reform. Throughout 2025, CPA will host a series of special events to honor its legacy, recognize the progress made, and inspire future efforts to support individuals who are justice-impacted. These events will bring together supporters, partners, and community members to celebrate CPA’s enduring impact and reaffirm its mission to deliver hope and second chances.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>January</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>An Evening at the Hartford Reentry Welcome Center (Jan. 23)</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>April</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Reentry Resource Fairs in Hartford &amp; Waterbury</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>June/July</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Celebrate! CPA Prison Arts 2025</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>150th Anniversary Gala at the Society Room on Sept. 18.</b></li> <li>○ <b>Prison Arts Program Annual Show</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>October</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>25th Annual Reentry Halloween Spooktacular Brunch</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>150th Annual Breakfast and Board of Directors Meeting</b></li> </ul>

As Community Partners in Action embarks on its 150th year, public support is more vital than ever in helping us continue to inspire hope and transform lives. By attending our events, including the *150th Anniversary Gala*, donors can celebrate the remarkable progress we've made and help us build momentum for the future. Public participation not only honors CPA's legacy but also strengthens our ability to provide essential services, foster community partnerships, and advocate for justice reform.

We ask the community to join us in making a lasting impact—whether through attending, sponsoring, or supporting any of our milestone events. Together, we can continue the work of offering second chances and creating brighter futures. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities or how to get involved, please contact Noely Sanchez Velez at [nsanchezvelez@cpa-ct.org](mailto:nsanchezvelez@cpa-ct.org).

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**About Community Partners in Action**

We're one of the nation's oldest criminal justice organizations, formerly known as the Connecticut Prison Association, and provide restorative justice services to young people and adults, so they can reenter the community and thrive. We deliver impactful services that unite people, programs and partnerships to empower individuals to change their lives for the better, make communities safer and stronger, and enhance the quality of life across Connecticut. For more information about Community Partners in Action, its history, and upcoming events, please visit [www.cpa-ct.org](http://www.cpa-ct.org).