

Concert To Help ServCorps

Nonprofit Focuses On Affordable Housing

Submitted by Ruth Grobe

SERVCORPS, INC.
FARMINGTON

On Friday, March 9, at 8 p.m., The Great White Way comes to Hartford. Asylum Hill Congregational Church.

The Hartford Financial Services Group, and Saint Francis Hospital & Medical Center are sponsoring "A Broadway Revue" with proceeds to benefit ServCorps, a nonprofit organization founded by Rev. Richard Grobe of Farmington and Rev. Peter Grandy of West Hartford. ServCorps organizes volunteers and low-income young people to build and rehabilitate affordable housing, both in the city of Hartford and on service trips to disaster-stricken communities.

Each week, ServCorps volunteers work on construction projects in collaboration with Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA) to increase the rate of owner-occupied housing Hartford's historic, beautiful Asylum Hill neighborhood that has endured the stress of poverty and absentee ownership. The use of volunteers keeps the housing affordable for low- to moderate-income families. In 2011, the volunteer corps added new members: 125 employees from The Hartford put in 10 Build Days under ServCorps supervision as part of the company's commitment to support the neighborhood.

The efforts are making a difference. Although the rate of home ownership for most of Asylum Hill is 9 percent, the rate on the streets where most of the construction takes place has jumped to 23 percent. ServCorps



RUTH GROBE, SERVCORPS

THE NEW HOME at 33 Sargeant St. in Hartford was largely constructed by volunteers and YouthBuild students under ServCorps supervision.

volunteers have worked on 10 units for NINA as well as an additional 6 units for Asylum Hill Congregational Church and Habitat For Humanity.

The most recently completed project is a new home in the Victorian style at 33 Sargeant Street on the footprint of a house that the City had condemned. ServCorps organized both volunteers and at-risk students enrolled in the YouthBuild Hartford Program of Co-opportunity, Inc.

The volunteer and student labor accounted for more than 50 percent of the work on 33 Sargeant Street, which was recognized as an "exceptional property" by visits from both Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra and Ms. Barbara Fields, the New England Regional Administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A family of four is now

calling this dwelling "home."

Although ServCorps is an independent, secular, nonprofit organization, its programs grew out of Rich Grobe's ministry at Asylum Hill Congregational Church. Because the popular "Broadway Revue" is in its fourth consecutive year, the church has used it as a model to launch a new concert series for the 2011-2012 season: "The John and Edie Murphy Music For Humanity Series." All concerts in the series are fully funded by gifts from the Murphys and others so that all proceeds can be passed to Hartford-based service organizations and agencies.

The show takes place at the church, 814 Asylum Avenue, Hartford. Tickets are \$20 and available by calling the ticket line at 860-278-0785, online at ahcc.org or at the door.