

A call to action in the fight against poverty

By Nancy Coughlin, CEO of Person to Person
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We must ask ourselves the question: how do we as individuals and organizations create the social changes needed that allow us to effectively understand and alleviate poverty?

Acknowledging the growing influence of poverty in our communities should not be limited to an awareness month in January. What is notable nonetheless, is that it does occur during the time we recognize and celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King challenged us to lift up our efforts to combat poverty when he said, “poverty is one of the most urgent items on the agenda of modern life. Why should there be hunger and privation in any land, in any city, at any table when we have the resources and the knowhow to provide all in need with the basic necessities of life. There is no deficit in human resources but there is in human will. The time is always right to do what is right.”

Thousands of people in our area currently are impacted by a dramatic rise in food insecurity, which has doubled just since 2021. They often choose between putting food on their tables or paying their rent and utilities. They go without warm clothing in winter, struggle every day to make ends meet. In lower Fairfield County, with one of the highest costs of living in the country, as many as 40 percent of the population cannot afford basic necessities. In Stamford alone, more than half of public-school students qualify for free or reduced price lunch programs.

Person to Person (P2P) is fortunate to have strong and deep partnerships with individuals, businesses, our political delegation, and other nonprofit organizations – communities that must all work together to address the root causes of poverty, including the legacy of race based housing and employment policies Dr. King identified in his Poor Peoples’ Campaign. For those of us who live and work every day to provide support to those we serve, our goal is to take action and create change, to stand up to poverty and the injustice that surrounds too many of our neighbors and friends.

Since 1968 P2P has been addressing this injustice by transforming the lives of those in need throughout lower Fairfield County, embracing the belief that every individual has the right to basic needs and the right to fashion a better

life for themselves, their families and their children.

For more than 50 years, P2P has been actively engaged in creating pathways to economic security, dignity, and respect for individuals and families in need. The organization operates three full-time food pantries, a clothing center, and provides

casework and financial assistance, particularly in emergency situations, to those struggling to meet their rent or utilities payments. Additionally, Person to Person extends its support to the Stamford community by offering summer camp opportunities to elementary age youth, ensuring they have enriching summer experiences they might otherwise miss out on. As the sixth Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) in Connecticut, P2P offers employment services, one-on-one financial coaching, and income support services for residents of Stamford. These offerings are integral to our comprehensive approach aimed at guiding individuals toward lasting economic security.

We call on all members of the community to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King when he said, “the time is always right to do what is right.” We encourage you to become involved in the movement to end poverty by volunteering your time, offering your financial support, running a food drive, or becoming civically engaged. When we reduce poverty, we improve people’s health and well-being, and allow people to reach their full potential – to become artists and astronomers, inventors, and visionaries. We all benefit when we create the social, economic, and political structures to lift all Americans out of poverty.



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