



333 Sherman Ave.
New Haven, CT 06511

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Local Activists “Light it Up” to Bring Crime Down
Nonprofit & Local Biz Partner with Residents to Make Shephard Street Safer

Contact: Office of Communications & Development, 203-562-0598 x224 or rfraser@nhsfnewhaven.org

Newhallville- June 12, 2019

On June 1st, local nonprofit agency NHS New Haven collaborated with Project Lighten Up, St. John’s Electric and Newhallville residents to install sixteen motion detecting lights at eight homes on Shephard Street in Newhallville.

The inspiration to bring better lighting to the streets of Newhallville began seven years ago when North Haven resident Alan Kendrix, moved by reading stories about child victims of shootings in Newhallville, set up a meeting with one of the pastors in the neighborhood. Upon first driving through, Kendrix noted Newhallville was the darkest neighborhood he had ever seen. Recognizing the central role of lighting in neighborhood safety, he contacted Reverend Donald Morris and the two formed Project Lighten Up, then worked with a network of local churches and NHS New Haven to lobby the city to install LED streetlights in Newhallville. They succeeded; in 2012 the city installed eleven street lights on Lilac Street, making the neighborhood the first in the city to have LED lighting.

Kendrix raised money from individuals and Center Church on the Green for this project and other safety initiatives. At a Newhallville Community Management Team meeting last winter, Kendrix offered to fund light installations at roughly ten homes in Newhallville.

Resident Harriett Banks heard Kendrix’s proposal and jumped at the chance to make a change for herself and her neighbors. At the time, tree overgrowth was obstructing streetlights on her block. Despite repeated service requests, the city had not responded. Banks contacted NHS New Haven’s director of Community Building & Organizing, Stephen Cremin-Endes, for info about Project Lighten Up and quickly found other neighbors who wanted to receive the installations. “We’ve always been neighbors that look out for each other,” she said. “We had a home invasion two years ago. It’s basically because of poor lighting.”

Banks said that without proper lighting, residents who arrive home late after a long day at work risk becoming a victim of crime between their car door and their front door. The risk is elevated for elderly residents who also have to worry about falling. Both residents and police officers face risk when entering dark spaces between buildings and behind buildings.

For Kendrix and NHS New Haven, the recent light installations are part of a long-term strategy to use environmental design to make neighborhoods safer. The central tenet of the approach is that crime is a product of the environment, rather than a product of innate criminality of residents. Thus, cities can reduce crime by evaluating and adjusting environmental factors to be less conducive to criminal behavior. In a trial conducted by the University of Chicago with forty public housing developments, increased lighting led to a thirty-six percent reduction in the index crime rate (which tracks a specific set of violent felonies) for crimes that took place outdoors at night, and a four percent overall reduction in the index crime rate. In Newhallville, the new lights on Shephard Street were installed between houses.



Phone: 203.562.0598 Fax: 203.772.2876

www.NHSofNewHaven.org On social media @NHSofNewHaven

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While the recent light installations in Newhallville were a success, the crusade for a safer and better-lit neighborhood is far from over.

“We’ll never be able to stop work when it comes to lighting and safety,” Kendrix said. “We are doing every little bit we can do.”

About NHS New Haven:

Founded in 1979 as Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, NHS New Haven is empowering families and revitalizing New Haven via social, economic, and environmental health. Their holistic approach to development includes creating affordable housing, building community, providing financial education and resident leadership training, and fostering environmental stewardship. Learn more at www.nhsfnewhaven.org