



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Hartford Public Library Receives Cigna Funding For New Mental Health Wellness Art Series**

HARTFORD – Hartford Public Library has received \$14,810 in funding from Cigna to pilot a new program called ARTLink, a series of community art workshops dedicated to increasing awareness around mental health through the arts.

“We are exceedingly grateful to Cigna for supporting this important initiative. We live in stressful times, which can often exacerbate mental health conditions. We know that participation in the arts has a number of positive social outcomes, not the least of which is an increase in quality of life. Through a range of artistic expression, this project will help combat the stigmas associated with mental health that can prevent people struggling with mental illness from seeking help,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, HPL’s president and CEO.

“Whether we are creating it or experiencing it, art has the capacity to stir our souls, lift our spirits and help us make sense of the world around us. And now, with funding from Cigna, the ARTLink program will use art to advance mental health awareness and promote healing, which is essential during the unsettling times we’re now experiencing,” said Wendy Sherry, president of Cigna's Connecticut market.

ARTLink, a mental health wellness art series, will consist of four series of community art workshops – podcasting, keyboarding, pottery and visual arts – all taught by working artists. Each series will host workshops with five participants, in line with COVID19 safety protocols, and each series will offer weekly workshops starting in October for a six-week period.

“Our city is dealing with many compounded challenges under COVID- it’s especially important now to continue carving out spaces for self-discovery, stress relief, wellness, and connecting with others,” said Liz Castle, HPL’s programming and events manager.

Through instruction and highlighting tools and resources for mental health information, ARTLink will work towards decreasing isolation and reducing the stigma and discrimination around mental and behavioral health, and provide participants the opportunity to learn new skills.

“Workshop participants will learn how to express themselves and their own stories in a series of hands-on art forms. Working artists will teach workshops on how to produce and record your own podcast

episode, how to begin playing the piano and record a song on a piano keyboard, how to use a basic pottery wheel and make a simple pot, and how to use visual art such as collage and painting to as a form of self-care,” Castle said.

ARTLink will culminate in an outdoor and online visual exhibition of all art and media created during the project. The locations of the outdoor exhibitions will be identified through collaborations with community partners, bringing public art to underserved communities.

The library will partner with Hartford Behavioral Health, the McKinney Shelter, and two Neighborhood Revitalization Zones to spread a message of education and community building to the streets.

For more information about Hartford Public Library programming, visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org).

For more information about Cigna, visit [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com).

### **About Hartford Public Library**

Now celebrating its 126th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).