

## Member Spotlight

### CEN Leads in Upgrading The Open Hearth's Connectivity

#### *The Open Hearth Provides Life Sustaining Services to Men Without Homes*

The Open Hearth is the oldest continually operating emergency shelter for men on the Eastern Seaboard. In 1884, The Open Hearth established a residency in Hartford, CT. The Open Hearth is a center dedicated to helping men experiencing homelessness that are in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction enhance their capacity for self-help, self-respect, dignity, and achieve their full potential as responsible citizens of Greater Hartford and Connecticut. The Open Hearth offers a variety of different services including: counseling and mentoring, recovery, healthcare, education, work experience, and employment.

Without access to a reliable Internet connection, The Open Hearth would not be able to offer these specific programs. These programs are tailored to help the resident men return to the community as quickly and as safely as possible with new skills that will aid them in achieving success on their own.

"The tech upgrade provided by Tilson and our new partnership with CEN allows our clients to learn new skills such as using Video Conferencing so that there weren't any interruptions in the vital services they receive such as mental health and addiction services.

As well, employers changed their protocols for hiring new staff by doing interviews and training via video conferencing, and our clients were able to meet their growing needs in a virtual environment."

**Luis Olmo-Rivera**

Development Coordinator at The Open Hearth



Main Entrance at 150 Charter Oak Ave. Hartford, CT

#### *CEN Delivers Point-to-Point Wireless Connection to The Open Hearth*

Before The Open Hearth connected to CEN's high-speed, fiber optic Internet service, they were struggling to operate with dial-up service. In addition, their aging legacy phone system was failing and migrating to broadband for Internet access and voice service became a critical need. Quotes from area providers for upgrades to fiber were not affordable.

CEN, the Office of Consumer Counsel, and Tilson approached The Open Hearth with a unique and affordable solution to rescue them from the broadband desert.

"This really was a win-win between The Open Hearth, CREC, CEN, and Tilson all coming together to make this happen. We're happy to have The Open Hearth join the CEN member community of anchor institutions, thankful for CREC for their willingness to help a community member, and Tilson for their leadership."

**Ryan Kocsondy**  
CEN Director

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The CEN, Tilson, and CREC team developed a wireless, point-to-point, solution providing The Open Hearth with gigabit Internet access. The Tilson team provided the expertise and wireless equipment to bring the service from CEN's point-of-presence at the neighboring CREC facility to The Open Hearth. This solution is not employed anywhere else on the CEN network.

CEN prides itself on being a community partner. Providing high speed connectivity to community anchor institutions like The Open Hearth is at the heart of CEN's mission. This critical infrastructure empowers these institutions to provide valuable, life sustaining services to citizens and communities.

With the upgraded connectivity, The Open Hearth has greatly enhanced their ability to provide services to their resident men.

### CEN Internet Service Quick Facts

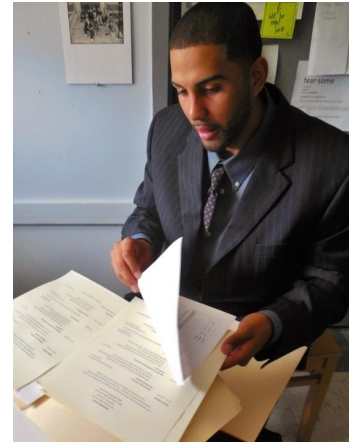


- 130 resident men served
- 32 work stations upgraded to high speed Internet access
- 20 new VOIP phones installed and operational

### *The Open Hearth Offers Residents Computer and Smart Phone Training*

Many men come to the center with little to no job experience and few employment skills. The Open Hearth provides 1:1 job coaching, computer and smart phone training, resume writing and interview techniques, and certification workshops. Without the help of CEN's connectivity, The Open Hearth would not be able to successfully maintain

these programs. Having a new internet connection has allowed for the resident men to talk to employers, update resumes, and utilize available online resources. In this pandemic climate, video conferencing capabilities are required to meet employers' recruiting and training protocols. Thanks to the CEN/Tilson, Internet solution, The Open Hearth residents were able to meet their growing needs in this environment.



Open Hearth resident participating in a resume and job interview skill training

In addition to employment assistance, The Open Hearth also administers healthcare services which consist of medical and behavioral care. With the shift to hybrid applications and the utilization of telehealth, the upgraded connectivity has allowed for residents to continue receiving their necessary care without worry and without having to leave the center for treatment.

Clearly, The Open Hearth relies on high speed connectivity to sustain critical operations and, most importantly, to provide their residents with life sustaining and enhancing services. The CEN/Tilson solution has been vitally important for ensuring the The Open Hearth's continued success as a community anchor institution.

"Thank you Tilson, CEN, and CREC for their support. We cannot thank them enough for their generosity and their commitment to our organization and the community we serve."

**Marilyn Rossetti**

The Open Hearth Executive Director