

# FoodCorps Connecticut Service Site Descriptions

Below you will find detailed descriptions of all of the service sites located in this state. Each description includes details about the community where the service site is based, the overall work and mission of the organization, and what an incoming service member can expect to do on a day-to-day basis at this site. We hope this document will help you to best determine where you are most interested in serving!

Please note that this is a list of FoodCorps service sites in the 2020-2021 program year and is likely to change for the next service term. Some of the sites listed here may no longer host service members next year, and new sites may come on board.

# Meriden Public Schools

## Meriden

### **Community Description**

Meriden, CT is an urban community with a population of approximately 61,000 people in its 24 square miles. Approximately one third of its residents are Hispanic or Latinx. Currently, 68% of the students in the Meriden Public Schools are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Forty-seven percent of Meriden's enrolled students are directly certified for free meals. Households that are directly certified receive SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps). To put this in perspective, a family of four can have a gross income of no greater than \$597 per week to qualify for SNAP benefits. Clearly these guidelines make it challenging for any household to maintain a food budget that includes a variety of nutrient-dense foods needed for health promotion, disease prevention, and academic success. Meriden Public Schools is a partner with these families to expand access to foods and promote good health and academic achievement.

### **Organization Description**

Meriden Public School District is comprised of 8 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 2 high schools. There is a total enrollment of approximately 9,000 students, about 68% of whom are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The Meriden Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Program is highly renowned on the state and national level. Meriden Public Schools is proud to have many HealthierUS School Challenge Awards and was the recipient of the first HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award of Distinction under strengthened criteria implemented in 2012. Meriden Public Schools has an extremely active wellness committee and has been the recipient of many health and wellness grants. Meriden Public Schools is well prepared and excited to continue to educate, prepare, and assist our students, families, and the community in the health and nutrition challenges they face.

### **Service Activities Description**

The service members in Meriden will each focus on two elementary schools in the district. Students will partner with teachers during the school day to integrate school gardens and food education into classroom lessons. Serving within the district Food Service Department, the service members will be very immersed in the inner workings of school food and wellness on a district-wide level. They will implement cafeteria taste-tests through a "Harvest Of The Month Program", highlighting a different fruit/vegetable each month of the school year. The service

members will also focus on reducing waste in their schools' cafeterias through a variety of school-wide promotional events and initiatives.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

The service member should have the ability to be independent and a self-directed leader, as well as a respect for diversity and ability to work with people from all backgrounds. Specific knowledge or education around nutrition and/or school meals is preferred, and knowledge of Spanish is helpful.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

## **East Hartford Public Schools**

### **East Hartford**

#### **Community Description**

East Hartford is an inclusive urban community with a focus on community engagement, anti-hunger initiatives, and community gardens. The city is located just outside of Connecticut's state capital.

#### **Organization Description**

East Hartford Public Schools is a large, urban district with about 7,000 students. East Hartford Public Schools employees work to deliver a high-quality learning experience for EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY. The district's Food Services Department oversees the FoodCorps programming, and ensures that all students are well nourished and ready to learn. The department has been improving and expanding their farm to school programming over the past few years, most recently being one of only two districts in the state to send representatives to the prestigious Northeast Farm to School Institute in Vermont.

**Service Activities Description**

Our service member will be immersed in one elementary school in the district. In the past, we have seen great success with introducing and building community around healthy school food environments by focusing on outcomes around family engagement we are looking to achieve through our Working Cities Grant (a grant awarded to help in projects that ensure residents feel connected, safe, and equipped with the basic skills and resources needed to succeed in life, career, and community). In general, the service member will be engaging school community members in goal-setting around farm to school initiatives. Specific activities will include: executing monthly local taste tests, also known as Put Local on Your Tray Day events, developing a school garden program and connecting it to classroom lessons with teachers, implementing a Sprout Scouts (garden-based learning) after school program, organizing health and wellness fairs, and reducing waste in the cafeteria by engaging students and promoting healthy options.

**Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

Skills that we would consider useful for this role would be: a willingness to connect with students, parents, principals, cafeteria staff, and teachers. The service member will need to be a great communicator as they will be involved in a variety of projects with different stakeholders throughout the year. As the service member will also be responsible for teaching a variety of age groups, they should have experience working with children, and the creativity and ability to adapt their activities to different audiences.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

**Food and Child Nutrition Services - Hartford  
Board of Education**

# Hartford

## Community Description

Hartford is Connecticut's capital city, and is the fourth largest city in the state, located right on the Connecticut River. It is nicknamed the "Insurance Capital of The World", with many insurance companies calling Hartford home. It also contains several colleges & universities, the nation's oldest public art museum (Wadsworth Atheneum), and a variety of historical museums and sites. Specifically, our school district is richly diverse and has a strong and vibrant Latinx and African American and West Indian community. Unfortunately, the majority of our families live below the poverty line and encounter multiple social-emotional stressors in their daily lives, this impacts our student's who thrive when in a supported and nurturing setting.

## Organization Description

Hartford Public Schools' Food & Child Nutrition Services is a self-operated Child Nutrition program located in a diverse urban district in Connecticut in the Northeast region of the country. The program services 47 public and 3 charter schools with a total enrollment of approximately 22,500 students. The 47 public schools participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), meaning that every student is able to eat all meals offered at their school at no cost. The program participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), At-Risk Supper Program, After-school Snack Program, and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. We know that only a well nourished child is a student who is ready to learn; our mission reflects this belief by ensuring that every student has access to nutritious, appealing and culturally appropriate foods throughout the school day. Furthermore, our vision is that Hartford Public School students will make healthy food choices which promote a vibrant and successful future! We have significantly expanded our partnerships with area farmers and have positive working relationships with key community organizations such as Knox Hartford, Hartford School Garden Advisory Team and the Hispanic Health Council.

## Service Activities Description

The service members based in Hartford will each collaborate with teachers and administrators in 2 FoodCorps schools each to connect the cafeteria to the classroom by developing and integrating nutrition education lessons into the classroom and garden spaces. Hartford Food & Child Nutrition Services takes pride in offering Hartford Public School students a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as culturally appropriate menu items. We are always looking for

new healthy, local food options and our FoodCorps service members will continue to be involved in helping us gain insight on what the students think of current menu options. Service members will work to promote our healthy options that are served during school lunch. Service Members will also engage with the Hartford School Garden Advisory Team and explore opportunities to start or build upon school garden efforts at their FoodCorps schools. Although service members will be doing much of these activities at their own two schools, the members will all be ultimately supervised by the Assistant Director of Nutrition support for Hartford Public Schools' Food & Child Nutrition Services, so will have the ability to collaborate as a team to achieve their goals and work on joint projects.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

It's important that the service member enjoy working with children (experience is a plus-our students can be VERY active and enthusiastic!)

Having Bi/Multilingual expertise (particularly, Spanish) and cultural competence (especially around our Hartford community) would be extremely helpful, as well. Having outside knowledge of nutrition and/or gardening would be a plus. Potential service members should be able to work in a fast-paced, ever-changing work environment, and should be able to function well in challenging, and at times, stressful situations. They should be skilled in engaging with diverse groups of people - parents, community groups, administrators, food service staff and of course students.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

**Naugatuck Public Schools**

# Naugatuck

## Community Description

Naugatuck is a relatively small borough of 32,000 residents and a median income of \$55,793, nearly \$12,000 less than the state's median income. It sits along Route 8 below the city of Waterbury. Naugatuck is within 10-15 miles of a community college, two four-year colleges and larger cities with more diverse businesses, including: hospitals, corporate offices and access to shows, museums, etc.

## Organization Description

Naugatuck Public Schools is a K-12 District of about 6,000 students, with: 1 high school (9-12), 1 middle school (7-8), 2 intermediate schools (5-6), and 5 elementary schools (K-4).

## Service Activities Description

The service member will work with one elementary school (K-4), within the district. First, we would like to introduce the FoodCorps based after-school program, Sprout Scouts to students so they have a way to engage in healthy eating outside of the regular school day. Our service member will also partner with teachers to implement in school nutrition & gardening lessons so that students ultimately learn what healthy food is and why it is important. The service member will help to involve our students in a healthy food council to work with cafeteria personnel to brainstorm what healthy options could be offered to students and staff. The service member will also spend their time working on cafeteria initiatives, such as planning and implementing monthly taste-tests in the cafeteria of new recipe ideas that feature local produce, and overall promoting healthy options that are being served.

## Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences

Our service member will need to be resilient, patient, kind and excited to work with kids. Our students love to work hands-on, so having someone who plans and assists with authentic, real-world experiences, like growing plants and food, would be important to us and what we value as a district. We would also like our service member to have some understanding of learning processes at the elementary level, and that students learn best by doing!

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish, Portuguese

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

# **The Consolidated School District of New Britain**

## **New Britain**

### **Community Description**

The City of New Britain is a small city with a diverse population of 73,000 residents. The racial make-up of the city is approximately 40% white, 40% Hispanic, 15% black, and 5% other. Large ethnic populations of Puerto Ricans, Polish, and Italians are present in the city. The median household income is \$35,000 and 25% of the population lives below the poverty line. Stanley works, the maker of Stanley tools (now Stanley-Black and Decker), originated in New Britain coining the nickname "Hardware City."

New Britain has a popular Double-A baseball team, and the nationally recognized New Britain Museum of American Art. Central Connecticut State University is also located in New Britain, providing various learning opportunities and community programs that engage people of all ages.

### **Organization Description**

The vision of the Consolidated School District of New Britain is to pursue excellence one student at a time. The mission of the Consolidated School District of New Britain is as follows: In partnership with family and community, the Consolidated School District of New Britain works to provide the best personalized and comprehensive whole-child education so our students will be prepared for, and positively contribute to, a profoundly different future. The Consolidated School District of New Britain serves over 10,000 students in 16 schools across the city.

### **Service Activities Description**

The service members will be deeply embedded in one elementary school each in the district, and, from time to time will also be engaged in community events through the strong partnership that The Consolidated School District of New Britain has with member



organizations of The Coalition for New Britain's Youth- including New Britain ROOTS (a former FoodCorps service site dedicated to increasing food access and food education around the city)

On a day-to-day basis, the service member's tasks will include but not be limited to: partnering with teachers to implement hands-on garden and nutrition lessons during the school day; tapping into already existing after school programs at the school to deliver food-based education during that time, and, partnering with New Britain Food Services (operated by Whiston's) to deliver school-wide taste-tests of new and exciting recipes.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

The FoodCorps member will need to be a self-starter. They will need basic gardening knowledge and the enthusiasm to work with youth of all grade levels. The FoodCorps member must show some experience in youth development. The member must be well organized and able to work independently and collaboratively.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

## **Norwalk Public Schools**

### **Norwalk**

#### **Community Description**

Norwalk is a coastal city located in Fairfield County, CT, just one hour from New York City. With a diverse population of almost 85,000, Norwalk is the sixth largest city in the state of Connecticut. Norwalk has many parks and shoreline area activities, a community garden - Fodor Farm community garden, a public golf course, and a public beach. The SoNo area of South Norwalk is one of the most lively areas with many restaurants, galleries, shops, and attractions. You will be one of two FoodCorps service member serving in Norwalk with two other FoodCorps service members in nearby Bridgeport.

#### **Organization Description**

At Norwalk Public Schools, our mission is to create a student-focused culture that motivates, challenges and supports each individual student to their highest levels of achievement. Over 1,000 dedicated professionals work closely with more than 11,000 students in 19 schools. The Norwalk Public School district is made up of 12 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 2 high schools, and 1 alternative high school program. Norwalk is also home to the Center for Global Studies, an inter-district high school magnet program, Norwalk Early College Academy, a collaboration between NPS, Norwalk Community College and IBM, and the Norwalk Early Childhood Center, an inclusive PreK program that opened in September 2016.

Our district's rich diversity is a key part of our strength. Norwalk students come from a variety of backgrounds, with more than 38% of students speaking a second language at home. The Norwalk Public School system delivers a learning experience that is rich in cultural diversity, as well as one that is reflective of the global society in which our graduates will work and live. Our vision is that all students will graduate prepared to reach their highest potential for college, career and life-long success in a globally competitive society.

### **Service Activities Description**

Norwalk Public Schools' is implementing a strategic operating plan to ensure that all students leave Grade 12 ready for future academic or work success. A key goal of this plan is ensuring safe and attractive schools that support learning and provide a nurturing, inclusive environment, with positive behavior interventions and supports at every school. School climate and school lunch quality/ environment have been identified as two key strategies in meeting this goal. FoodCorps service members, through regular hands-on learning in the classroom and gardens, and cafeteria activities will be providing direct support to schools in meeting the needs of their student population and supporting the district vision to be the most successful city school system in CT.

Each FoodCorps service member in Norwalk will support district elementary schools in the following way:

**Hands-on Education:** Providing ongoing lessons in both classroom and garden spaces, during and after school

**Healthy Meal Promotion:** Maintain a regular presence during meal times to encourage students to try new foods, promote healthy options, and lead activities to support a positive and inclusive cafeteria experience

Schoolwide Culture of Health: Support school goals and activities that engage staff and parents in creating a healthy school food environment.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

## **Middletown Board of Education**

### **Middletown**

#### **Community Description**

Middletown is a city of 48,000 people and is located right on the Connecticut River, essentially in the “middle” of the state. The city itself is forty-two square miles and includes a mix of rural, urban, and suburban areas. The city’s downtown area boasts many tasty restaurants, bookstores, and theaters.

#### **Organization Description**

Middletown Public Schools Food Services hosts the FoodCorps service member in Middletown. The food service department provides school meals to the district’s 11 schools – 8 elementary, 2 middle, 1 high school, and 1 transition academy. The district serves just under 5,000 students, 28% of whom are black or african american, 51% of whom are hispanic or latinx, and 18% of whom are white. As a district, the majority of students receive free/reduced price lunch. The FoodCorps service member serves the two highest need schools in the district.

#### **Service Activities Description**

The service member will spend most of their time at two K-5 elementary schools in the district. At their schools, the service member will work in conjunction with the staff to develop a time for classroom instruction related to healthy eating habits- tying in the school gardens when appropriate. The service member will also help with a composting program to teach about food waste and to ensure that students complete hands-on-learning in all areas: growth,

consumption, and regeneration within the earth. The service member will also offer taste-tests for students, allowing them the opportunity to try new foods in the cafeteria.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

The service member should possess a friendly, approachable demeanor. A basic knowledge of food preparation and nutrition is a must, and experience working with children, ideally in the K-5 age range is extremely helpful.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

## **New Haven Public Schools**

### **New Haven**

#### **Community Description**

New Haven is the second largest city in Connecticut, after Bridgeport, and the sixth largest in New England, with a population of about 125,000 people, over 30% of whom live in poverty. New Haven is home to several colleges & universities, including Yale University, which is an integral part of the city's economy, being New Haven's biggest taxpayer and employer. Health care, professional services, financial services, and retail trade also help to form an economic base for the city. In its 20 square miles, New Haven boasts a shoreline, but also a variety of trails to hike through West Rock Ridge State Park, as well as a downtown robust with shops, art galleries, coffee shops, and music venues.

#### **Organization Description**

The mission of the New Haven Public Schools Food Service Department is to ensure that delicious, healthy meals are available to all New Haven students. We strive to serve good quality meals that utilize ingredients from many local producers and promote the health and wellness of students, so they can be more productive in the classroom. We are an active participant in the Connecticut Farm to School & Farm to Chef Programs.

### **Service Activities Description**

The two FoodCorps service members in New Haven are hosted by the district's food service department. Each service member will serve 2 schools that are ripe and ready for the support and energy of a FoodCorps service member. At these schools service members will partner with cafeteria staff, teachers, administrators, and wellness coordinators, to foster a schoolwide culture of health. Specific activities will include, but are not limited to: building & supporting school gardens, interpreting & implementing age appropriate (K-8) nutrition curriculum in the classroom, and facilitating meetings to bring more stakeholders into the process. Although the service members will do much of their service at their two schools, they are ultimately supervised by Food & Nutrition Services, so service members will also be tasked with planning cafeteria taste-tests with the use of local produce, in accordance with the "Put Local On Your Tray" (CT Harvest of the Month) program.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

The service member should have some knowledge of basic nutrition principles, and knowledge of agriculture in relation to building school gardens. The service member should have experience working with and managing groups of children. They should also have knowledge and proficiency of computer programs such as Word, Excel, and Microsoft Office.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish, Arabic, Italian

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

# New London Public Schools

## New London

### **Community Description**

New London is a small, shoreline city that is only 7 square miles. It is located directly between Boston and NYC, with access to Amtrak through the Shoreline East railway. It is a great place to live because it offers a small city life with a range of restaurants, art galleries, clothing stores, and two grocery stores. It also offers quaint beach community living, with Ocean Beach and Harkness Memorial State Park located not far from downtown.

### **Organization Description**

The mission of the New London Public School Food Service Department is to ensure that delicious, healthy, high quality meals are available to all students. We strive to serve good quality meals that utilize ingredients from local producers and promote the health and wellness of students so they can be more productive in the classroom. New London Public Schools is part of a unique partnership with Chef Daniel Giusti and his company Brigaid. Brigaid puts professional chefs in each school cafeteria to completely re-think school lunch by creating scratch made foods, engaging in nutrition education, and changing the entire attitude around food served in schools.

### **Service Activities Description**

The service members will serve one elementary school each by collaborating with New London Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services staff, school teachers, principals and Brigaid chefs based in the schools' kitchens. In the classroom, the service member will be responsible for incorporating garden education, and a new Farm to School curriculum developed through a grant into the students' day-to-day learnings. The service member will also build support around the school gardens- ensuring that teams of staff and teachers meet to to promote sustainability for those gardens. In the cafeteria, the service member will help promote healthy menu items, that have been developed by Brigaid.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

It is highly preferred that the service member hold a Bachelor's degree, or have background in nutrition, or, something equivalent. They will be supervised by the Food Services Department, so should be interested in the inner workings of school food, but, they will also spend large

parts of their day engaging with students, and it is therefore also important that they enjoy and have experience working with groups of children.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish

**Service Members Need Car?** Required

## **Green Village Initiative**

### **Bridgeport**

#### **Community Description**

Bridgeport is Connecticut's largest city, and is located a little over an hour from NYC and just two hours from Boston along the Connecticut coast with easy public transportation to both. In Bridgeport, The Green Village Initiative office is located in converted industrial lofts, just minutes from the downtown area, which has available housing for FoodCorps service members. Bridgeport is a vibrant, diverse, and creative city on Long Island Sound with lovely beaches, incredible community organizations, many tasty restaurants, great architecture, and a large, young, engaged population.

#### **Organization Description**

Green Village Initiative is a small urban agriculture nonprofit in Bridgeport, CT whose mission is to grow food, knowledge, leadership and community through urban gardening and farming, to create a more just food system in Bridgeport. Our close-knit team and our partners promote our mission through our urban farm, 23 school gardens, 13 community gardens, and youth leadership program. We are on the ground networking with local change makers, growing delicious Bridgeport vegetables, creating spaces for skill-sharing, and empowering our youth to make change. Green Village Initiative works collaboratively with municipalities, school systems, and a wide range of nonprofit and for-profit organizations to grow the fair food future we want to see in our city.

### **Service Activities Description**

Our service members will each serve two schools, in this large school district. Goals for our service members include helping our School Garden Coordinators at the schools within our network to foster even more community engagement within the school garden by linking with the School's Family Resource Centers and food service programs, providing lesson units to interested educators, and supporting GVI's existing Garden Workshop Series. Additionally, our Service Members will work to deploy and collect feedback on the new Bridgeport School Garden Curriculum that GVI's School Garden Advisory group has created with Bridgeport teachers & Sacred Heart University over the past three years.

### **Skills, Interest, Knowledge Preferences**

We look forward to working with a FoodCorps Service Member who has strong interpersonal and analytical skills so that they are able to see the big picture, but also feel comfortable communicating details. An ability to comfortably work in an urban educational environment and literacy for food justice challenges facing communities like ours in Bridgeport are deeply appreciated.

**Helpful Languages:** Spanish, Creole

**Service Members Need Car?** Required