



Malta House of Care

Mobile Medical Clinic

Wonder Women Class of '18 **Hyacinth Yennie of Hartford** **South End Community Activist**

In Hartford, and particularly in the South End, Hyacinth Yennie's name is synonymous with pride of place and respectful, productive community activism.

A small business owner – she and her late husband have owned Donchian Rug Cleaners on Preston Street since 1976 – Hyacinth is perhaps best-known as the face of the Maple Avenue Revitalization Group. Since 2002 she has chaired this active and influential citizen group, which meets monthly at St. Augustine Church on Campfield Avenue – coincidentally, one of Malta's neighborhood Clinic sites.

Indeed, it's hard to imagine an event – or a controversy – in the South End of Hartford in which Hyacinth and the Maple Avenue group do not have a voice. “Her involvement with this group is very meaningful to her,” said her daughter Melissa Yennie. “It brings her joy to advocate for a high quality of life and public safety for everyone in the South End.”

In 2008, she helped to found the [South End Wellness Senior Center at 830 Maple Avenue, an important social and support hub for hundreds of area residents](#) – and for which she continues to advocate. When Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin proposed a 10% reduction in funding for the city's Senior Centers in the spring of 2017, Hyacinth was characteristically straightforward: "There's nothing more to cut," she told the *Hartford Courant*. “We can't afford any more cuts. He's got to find it somewhere else.”

Six years ago, in the face of increasing gun violence, Hyacinth decided that neighbors sometimes need to gather for positive reasons. Thus was born the [Barry Square Community Day](#), an enormous barbecue held outside the Warner Theater each summer; last year, it attracted 1,200 people.

Hyacinth is active in myriad other city groups – including the Hartford Public High School governance team and the Boards of the South Park Inn housing shelter; Channel 3 Kids' Camp; Immanuel Church Housing Corporation; and the Hartford Police Dept Firearm Discharge Board, to name just a few – and has received dozens of honors over the years. And, as the mother of three, she has always been [fiercely committed to the quality of education available in Hartford \(and the importance of parental involvement in their children's lives\)](#).

In October 2017, [Hyacinth traveled to the Cape to participate in a community forum on race relations and policing](#) hosted by Chatham Police Chief Mark Pawlina, who previously worked in Hartford and knew Hyacinth to be a smart, fair, persistent, but respectful neighborhood advocate. That evening, she offered this advice to the people of Chatham: “An ‘us versus them’ attitude is not helpful,” she said. “Make sure that everyone respects one another. When you build community, when police know who you are, you feel safer.”