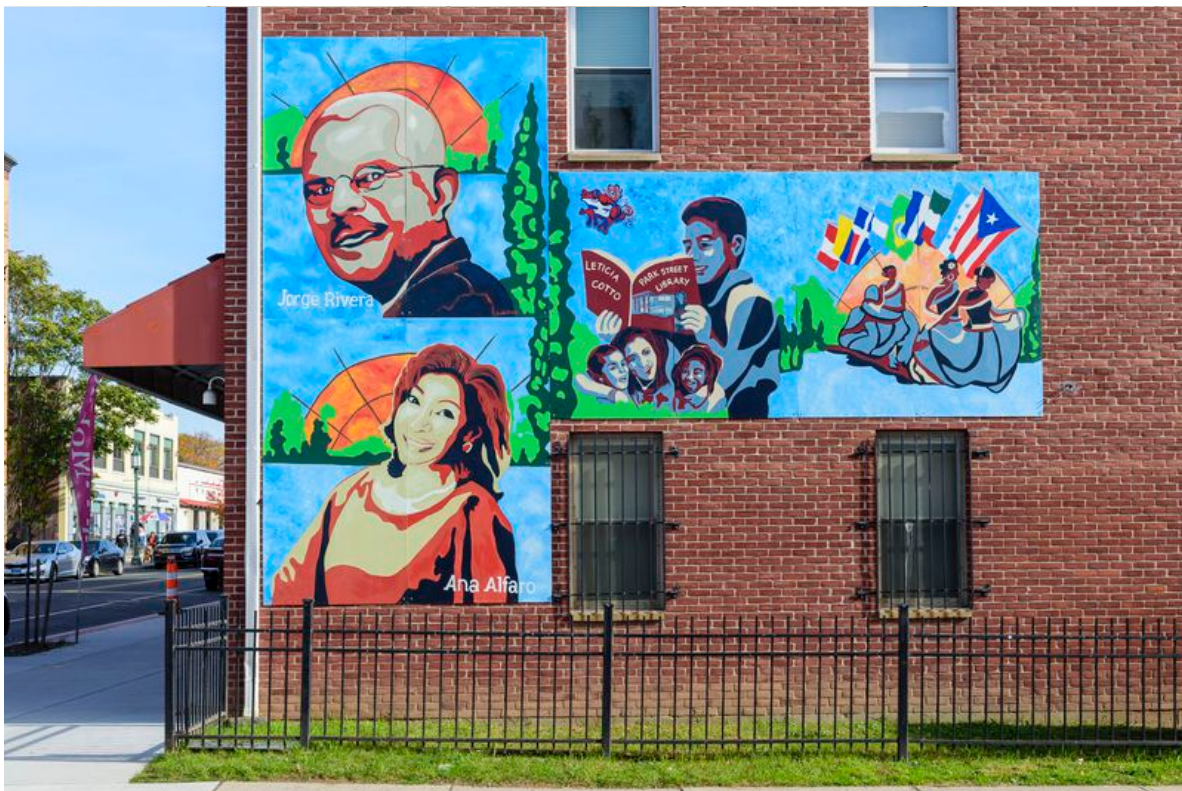


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Here are the heroes behind the faces you see on nine new Frog Hollow murals

Susan Dunne

7-9 minutes



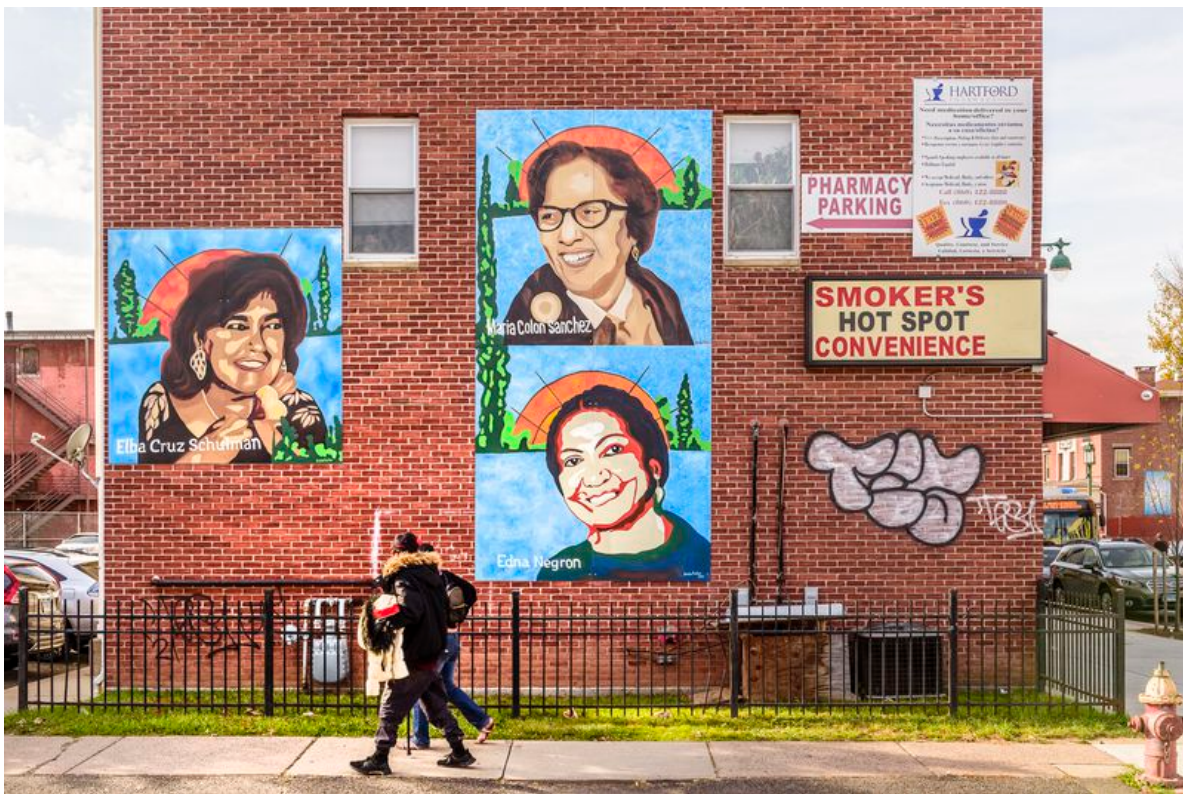
The Frog Hollow Heroes murals at 493 Park St. feature Jorge Rivera, Leticia Cotto and Ana Alfaro. (Mark Mirko/The Hartford Courant)

Nine new murals were unveiled in the Frog Hollow section of Hartford on Nov. 6. Longtime residents of the neighborhood will

recognize the nine faces: They are residents who have been designated Frog Hollow Heroes in recognition of their dedication to and impact on the community.

The murals — at 463 Park St., 493 Park St. and 988 Broad St. — were created by about 130 volunteers under the direction of artists Emida Roller, Jaii Marc and Dekka Henry, all working under the umbrella of CT Murals.

Matt Conway of CT Murals said the \$22,000 project was funded by a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Beautification Grant and co-sponsored by Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance and Hartford Public Library. The murals are part of Nuestra Historia: Frog Hollow, a project to create a digital, bilingual oral-history walking tour.



The Hartford Heroes mural at 463 Park St. features Elba Cruz Schulman, Maria Colon Sanchez and Edna Negron. (Mark Mirko/The Hartford Courant)

Who are the heroes depicted in the murals?

Maria Sánchez

Maria C. Colón Sánchez

Maria C. Colón Sánchez Elementary School was named in honor of Maria Sánchez (1926-1989), a community organizer, political leader and bilingual education advocate. She was known as “la madrina” (the godmother) of the city’s Puerto Rican community. In 1972, she and Edna Negron spearheaded the opening of the state’s first bilingual school. Six years later Sánchez won a lawsuit mandating bilingual education in Hartford schools. In 1973, she won a seat on Hartford’s board of education, making her the first Puerto Rican to win public office in the city. In 1988, she was elected state representative, a first for a Latina.

Edna Negron





Edna Negrón Rosario

Edna Negrón Rosario is known nationwide for establishing the country's first school-based health clinic and family resource center. This happened when she was principal of Kinsella Elementary School, which she renamed Ramón E. Betances School, in honor of a Puerto Rican doctor and activist. As an educator, she focused on Puerto Rican history, bilingual education and community wellness. In 1989, Maria Sánchez died after serving one year as representative of Connecticut's 6th House District. In a special election, Negrón was chosen to succeed Sánchez. She was elected to the seat in her own right in 1990.

Juan Fuentes





Juan Fuentes-Vizcarrondo

The mural of Juan Fuentes-Vizcarrondo (1932-2015) shows him toting a camera. For four decades, he was dedicated to photographically documenting the Puerto Rican community in Hartford. His motto was, “If you see injustice, pick up your camera,” recalled his daughter, Carmen, at the mural dedication. Fuentes spearheaded La Prensa Gráfica, Connecticut’s first Spanish-language newspaper, from 1972 to 1975; and a bilingual newspaper, El Observador, from 1976 to 1982. In addition to his internationally recognized photographic work, he was a Hartford Times columnist, a poet, a musician and an actor.

Leticia Cotto

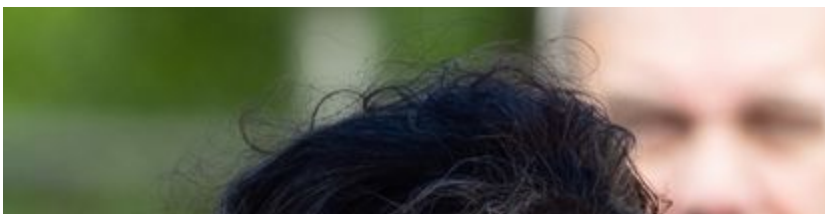




Leticia Cotto

People have congregated around Leticia “Letty” Cotto for years. Starting in 2004, Cotto and her family operated La Paloma Sabanera, a coffeehouse-Spanish-language bookstore. Until it closed in 2013, “Hartford’s living room” hosted book talks, musical events, poetry readings and film screenings. More recently, Cotto has poured her love of books, art and community into Hartford Public Library, first as manager of the Park Branch, where in addition to her duties she taught English as a Second Language and computer literacy and oversaw art exhibits and a community garden. Today Cotto is the library’s customer experience officer.

Ana Alfaro





Ana Alfaro

Ana Alfaro is a community relations specialist at Eversource Energy where she manages employee volunteer opportunities. Alfaro's life has been dedicated to volunteerism: She has served on boards of Catholic Charities, Forge City Works, Immigrant Heritage Hall of Fame, Broad Park Development Corp. and Hartford Public Library. For three decades, she helped to advocate for a library on Park Street. That library finally opened in October 2021. Since 2007, Alfaro has produced and hosted "El Show de Analeh" on Univision and UniMas networks, which features news important to the city's Latinx citizens.

Rev. Julie Ramirez



Rev. Julie Ramirez

Julie Ramirez (1931-2016) founded Faith Temple of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal community in Hartford, and served as its pastor for 53 years. Ramirez was called Sister Julie and Deborah of Hartford, referring to a courageous Biblical female figure. That courage was needed when she oversaw the church's move from Main Street to Broad Street, which ruffled some feathers in the community. Ramirez had a weekly radio show, "The Hour of Faith," and she regularly performed Spanish-language

religious services for incarcerated people at correctional facilities in Somers, Enfield and Niantic.

Yessica Amparo

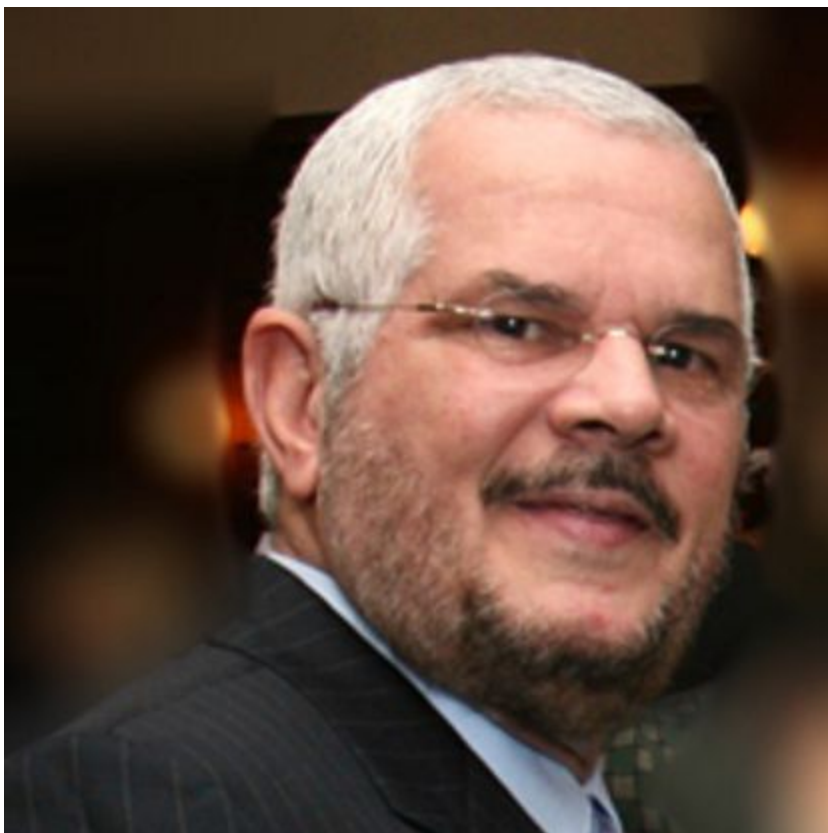


Yessica Amparo

Yessica Amparo is a youth development specialist at Our Piece of the Pie, which mentors city youths in skills to succeed in education and employment. Amparo moved to Hartford from the Dominican Republic at age 13. Amparo, at the unveiling ceremony, said she was surprised to realize she was considered a hero, but was told

by her young clients that she was a hero to them; they nominated her and all voted for her. As part of her work, Amparo oversees work of the Youth Service Corps, which tends community gardens, picks up hundreds of bags of trash and canvasses the neighborhood.

Jorge Rivera



Jorge Rivera

Jorge Rivera grew up poor in Caguas, Puerto Rico. When he moved to Hartford, he studied law and dedicated his life to helping disadvantaged members of the Latinx community. In 1991, he founded Mi Casa, a family service and education center to help struggling youths and offer support to their families. In 2013, the Hispanic Health Council merged with Mi Casa and Hispanos Unidos of Meriden and New Haven to serve the health and wellness needs of the state's Latinx population. The combined

organization now continues to offer support to youths and families and works to affect statewide policy.

Elba Cruz Schulman

Elba Cruz Schulman

Elba Cruz Schulman (1942-2020) helped the community in any way she could: as a drug counselor, a family and youth counselor, an advocate for Cuban refugees, a community educator, and as a social worker. She coordinated the Hartford Mayor's Passport to Success Program and the annual Festival of Lights toy drive program in Hartford. At the mural dedication, Schulman's widower Sydney Schulman told a story to illustrate his wife's dedication to the job: Schulman received a call at midnight, when they were out dancing, that one of her clients needed help. So they went, she in her gown and he in his tuxedo.

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Susan Dunne is a staff writer with a focus on arts and entertainment news. Her beat ranges from art exhibits, film festivals, books releases, residents appearing on TV or any other topic of local interest. Dunne has a journalism degree from California State University at Fullerton. Dunne came to The

Courant in 1989, starting as copy editor.