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Benefit screening of Paddington™ film raises \$31,000 for the *be homeful* project to end family homelessness

People's United Community Foundation awards \$25,000 grant to the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness to kick-start the be homeful project to end family homelessness before it begins

Stamford, CT (Jan. 12, 2015) — A sneak preview of the wonderful new family film, *Paddington*, at the Avon Theatre in Stamford on Sunday, Jan. 11 raised more than \$31,000 for the *be homeful* project to end family homeless before it begins.

This family-friendly screening was made possible through generous support from Lindberg Marketing+Media LLC, The Weinstein Company, and yOttOy, which donated 120 Paddington plush bears as gifts to donors of \$20 or more to the *be homeful* project. The screening took place in the historic Avon Theatre thanks to the generosity of Chuck and Deborah Royce, and with generous sponsorship from Reba Williams.

In Connecticut every year, 1,300 families experience homelessness, including 2,400 children, half of whom are under the age of 5. Funds raised through the *be homeful* project will help families on the brink of homelessness stay in the comfort of home by offering emergency resources for costs like rent and utilities. The goal of *be homeful* is to end family homelessness before it begins.

Vincent Santilli, executive director of People's United Community Foundation, presented a \$25,000 grant to *be homeful* before the screening of the movie.

“This morning, we all rolled out of our warm beds to get ready to come to this movie,” Santilli said. “But across the state of Connecticut there are many families who didn’t have a warm bed to crawl out of this morning. *Be homeful* will help change that. We couldn’t be more excited, more thrilled, to kick off this project with this \$25,000 grant.”

In total since its launch December 1, 2014, the *be homeful* project has raised more than \$43,000 in gifts, grants, ticket sales commitments, and proceeds from a flash sale of Paddington movie memorabilia and props on Gilt.com.

More than \$6,000 was raised at the movie screening from ticket sales and individual donations.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal attended the screening to help officially kick-off *be homeful*. “This project shows that people can make a difference,” he said. “That’s what *be homeful* is going to do for lots of children across Connecticut and the United States. Imagine waking up in the morning and not knowing where you are going to sleep that night. That’s the reality for 1,300 families and 2,400 children in Connecticut. *Be homeful* will make their lives better.”

“We know how to prevent family homelessness,” said Lisa Tepper Bates, executive director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the agency overseeing *be homeful*. “Through *be homeful* we are seeking to raise \$1 million to prevent homelessness and to keep families in the comfort of a home. Gifts large and small matter — if every person in Connecticut gave \$1, we could help 1,500 families stay in their homes.”

Erica Lindberg, president of Lindberg Marketing+Media LLC, urged those in attendance to get involved. “Everyone has a story,” she said, urging kids to join Paddington as champions to end family homelessness. “You can be agents of compassion and kindness by helping other children tell their stories. By becoming involved in the *be homeful* project, you can help children in your community.”

On Sunday, *be homeful* announced a new initiative through which children around Connecticut will host Paddington “marmalade jar drives” to raise funds to help families in their own communities. To kick off this initiative, CCEH Executive Director Lisa Tepper Bates presented an inaugural giant marmalade jar filled with Paddington plushes to Bobby Walker Jr., CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Greenwich, who plans to hold a drive in the school library in order to educate his members about homelessness and let them know that they each in their own way can make a difference in the lives of families on the brink of becoming homeless. Additional information about marmalade drives can be found by visiting behomeful.org/teach.

People interested in making donations or holding marmalade jar drives can visit behomeful.org or contact Katie Kenney at (860) 721-7876 or by email at kkenney@cceh.org.