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Connecticut Main Street Center Announces New Staff

(Hartford, CT) – Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) announced today the hiring of two new staff members. Dave Helmin has been named Business Development Specialist and Ingrid S. Naumann is the new Office Manager. Both positions have just been created. “We are in an exciting period of growth right now,” said Executive Director John Simone. “With the development of our Downtown Resource Center, CMSC is now able to reach out to a growing network of downtown revitalization advocates throughout the state. Dave and Ingrid will complement our existing staff with their knowledge, expertise and dedication to our mission.”

Connecticut Main Street Center is the state’s leading resource for cities and towns seeking to comprehensively revitalize their “main street” districts. CMSC, a non-profit organization whose major sponsors are the Connecticut Light & Power Company / Yankee Gas and the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, is a member of the respected National Main Street network and is committed to bringing Connecticut’s commercial districts back to life socially and economically.

Through membership in CMSC’s Downtown Resource Center or Designation as a Connecticut’s Main Street program, any community can participate in and benefit from CMSC’s statewide and national networks, access to information, technical assistance and advocacy. Current Designated Connecticut Main Street Communities include New London, Niantic, Norwich, Portland, Rockville, Simsbury, the Upper Albany neighborhood of Hartford, Waterbury, Winsted, and Windsor.

Since the Connecticut Main Street program began in 1995, participating communities have generated over \$400 million in public and private reinvestment in their downtowns. Over the same time, 287 net new businesses have opened and 1,821 net new jobs have been created. This represents \$75.25 of reinvestment for every \$1 spent on a local Main Street program, making the Main Street initiative one of the most successful economic development programs in the country.

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Attached: CMSC Staff Bios

CMSC Staff Profiles

John Simone, Executive Director

John Simone became the Executive Director of the Connecticut Main Street Center in 2000. Under his leadership, CMSC has grown in many directions. The number of designated Main Street communities has doubled to ten programs. The statistical gains in these downtowns have been extraordinary. Cumulatively these downtowns have attracted \$401 million in reinvestment from both the private and public sectors (a 473% increase since 2000). The number of net new businesses is 287 (a 273% increase since 2000). The number of net new jobs is 1,821 (a 103% increase since 2000). The number of volunteer hours logged is over 127,000 (a 388% increase since 2000).

In 2005, John oversaw the launching of two new programs – the Downtown Resource Center (DRC) and the Downtown Revitalization Institute (DRI). The DRC provides more opportunities, at various levels of commitment, to communities that want to benefit from learning how to implement a comprehensive revitalization program. Membership in the DRC is open to all municipalities, commercial neighborhoods, organizations and individuals who are interested in revitalizing their districts. DRI offers quarterly seminars that, collectively, will provide a comprehensive training experience for municipalities, organizations and individuals in all aspects of downtown revitalization.

To support this growth, John has built the staff from two to four professionals. He is also responsible for developing the team of regional and national experts and partners to complement CMSC staff's expertise and provide a wide spectrum of resources and services in downtown revitalization. This year, he was elected by his peer state Main Street executive directors to serve on the first national executive committee to advance national advocacy issues.

John's Main Street career began in 1996 when he became the first executive director for First Town Downtown, Windsor Center's Main Street program. In the first three years of this program 30,000 square feet of vacant space was filled with retail and restaurants representing over \$5 million of investment. Prior to this, he worked for the Hartford Ballet for over 20 years. He was a founding member of its professional dance company serving 15 years as managing and then executive director. He was a contributing author to the anthology entitled, "Market the Arts" published by the Foundation for the Effective Development of American Professional Theater (FEDAPT) and he has served on numerous grants panels and awards juries.

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He lives in West Hartford with his wife and two children.

Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker, Associate Director

Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker has been the Associate Director of the Connecticut Main Street Center since 2000. During her tenure at CMSC she has developed the quarterly newsletter, *CT's Main Streets*; the website ctmainstreet.org; the **CMSC Annual Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization**; and was instrumental in the success of **Main Street SOLUTIONS**, Connecticut's Only Annual Commercial District Revitalization Conference. She has been involved in the development and launching of CMSC's two new programs – the Downtown Resource Center (DRC) and the Downtown Revitalization Institute (DRI). Formerly the Director of Membership & Development of the Connecticut chapter of The American Institute of Architects, Kim has experience in nonprofit organizational development, volunteer coordination, membership activities, public relations & marketing and has produced a variety of special events, trade shows, conventions and conferences.

In 1994 she became a co-founding member of The Connecticut Vocal Ensemble, an organization whose mission was to provide highly trained, young professional singers with experience in preparing and performing roles in full-length operas in intimate settings. A professional opera and concert singer, Kim holds degrees from New England Conservatory of Music and Boston University. She has performed extensively throughout North America and the Far East and continues her performing career, though closer to home. A former resident of New Haven, Kimberley now resides in West Hartford, CT, with her husband Bill Whitaker, a Broadway musician, and their young daughter, Daley.

David A. Helmin, Business Development Specialist

Dave comes to us with twenty six years in the hospitality industry including six years as an owner/operator of two restaurants; the Corner Café, a lunch/dessert café and espresso bar located in Putnam, CT and the Calabash Coffee Company and Café, a coffee micro-roastery, café, art gallery, and retail store located in Historic Brooklyn, CT.

During his tenure in Northeast Connecticut, Dave was a member with the Northeast Chamber of Commerce. He also was integral in the continued development of the Putnam Business Association and Putnam Antique Dealers Association.

Prior to this, Dave spent over nine years with the Morse School of Business initially as an instructor in their Hotel and Restaurant Management Program teaching

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courses which included Intro to the Hospitality Industry, Food, Beverage, and Labor Cost Controls, Dining Room and Banquet Management, Convention Sales and Services, Hospitality Marketing, Business Law, and Small Business Management and Ownership. Over time, he developed the position of Department Chair for that program and eventually became the Director of Education for the school. He was responsible for ten academic departments which included overseeing nine department chairs, seventy seven instructors, and over six hundred students. Ultimately, Dave collaborated with another colleague to design and develop the curriculum for the Center for Culinary Arts located in Cromwell, CT.

From fast food to fine dining, Dave has also spent time in various positions and management teams with McDonald's Corporation, Schenectady, NY, Brigham's Ice Cream, Arlington, MA and surrounding Boston suburbs, ChiChi's Mexican Restaurants, Yonkers, NY and Enfield, CT, 36 Lewis Street, Shenanigans, Hot Tomatos, Hot Tamales, The Gathering Place, and Max Downtown, all in Hartford, CT.

Most recently, Dave has worked as a consultant with the University of Connecticut School of Law's Dean Office to develop and implement an espresso bar located on the Hartford West End Campus.

Ingrid Naumann, Office Manager

Ingrid brings to CMSC a wide variety of administrative and managerial experience. Her career includes over 20 years in the banking industry with experience in administration and small business loan servicing and processing. She spent several years as Associate Marketing Manager for a financial services compliance company where she also acted as the in-house graphic designer. Additionally, Ingrid has worked in the life insurance industry, and real estate management and restaurant management businesses. Originally from Washington State, Ingrid moved to Connecticut with her family in 2000. Her two children attend college in Vermont and Pennsylvania.

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