A s winter sets in, and the days grow shorter, reforestation, and horticulture are the last things on most minds. At Knox, Hartford’s landscape is our key concern, regardless of the season. As we approach the 1000th tree planted this year and put our largest garden to bed for first time, we envision 2013. Hartford’s rate of childhood obesity is shocking high, underscoring the importance of involving children in our community and school gardening program. Each child in Hartford deserves a vegetable-rich diet and exercise. Our partnership with Aetna and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Hartford introduces parents and children to healthy living at Knox’s community garden on Huntington Street. This strategic partnership is part of our 5 year strategic plan, which Knox’s staff and Board of Directors developed and ratified this year. This plan outlines a set of strategies that will raise Knox’s level of effectiveness and sustainability, thereby empowering you, our supporters, and our staff to carry Knox’s mission into each and every corner of Connecticut’s capital.

While parts of the strategic plan are subtle and “behind the scenes,” you will surely notice the new Knox brand and website rolled out in 2013. A recurring thought I had throughout the entire process is how uncommon Knox’s work is these days. In cities across America, you expect vacant lots and graffitied monuments clean. We are excited about our new projects, including a brand new community garden and additional tree plantings. At our Hartford Blooms Awards event last week, Mayor Segarra announced he will continue to make greening the city a priority.

Our tree planting goal for Hartford is 20,000 new trees in 20 years. This will raise Hartford’s tree canopy coverage by 10% to 36%. This canopy is near optimal to reduce Hartford’s high asthma rate and cool its hot pavement and buildings in the summer.

When we plant new trees in Hartford, we work directly with Heather Dionne, Hartford’s City Forester, and each tree is planted with her approval. Each variety is chosen with the DEEP’s and Knox’s motto of “Right Tree, Right Site” in mind. Tall canopy trees are not planted under overhead utility wires, and wide yards. For example, Dogwood Trees would be a good candidate for a small yard under overhead wires. An Oak or Maple would compliment a wide yard with plenty of space overhead.

Finally, I would like to thank our many individual and corporate donors and volunteers. Without you, Knox couldn’t face Hartford’s environmental challenges head-on. We would also like to thank the Segarra administration for their green vision. To you, our staff, and board members, have a wonderful and safe holiday season. I can’t thank you enough for all you do for Knox!

Katherine Lambert was presented with a Hartford Blooms Award for the landscaping she’s done on her home on Elizabeth Street. These awards are presented to individuals, businesses and organizations who have done an exceptional job in landscaping their properties.

We are excited to announce our new logo and name, KNOX, Inc. Causality, a firm specializing in nonprofit brand identity, awarded us a grant last year and led the process of designing a creative, contemporary look with us. With this newsletter, we officially say Goodbye “Knox Parks,” Hello “KNOX”! This year and put our 1000th tree planted in 2013. We’re happy to have you by our side as we begin this journey – we can’t wait to see what the future holds for KNOX!