

Rybczyk fills shoes of CEO at New Opportunities, Inc.

BY MIKE PATRICK REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN April 6, 2021

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WATERBURY, CT. —William Rybczyk, President and CEO of New Opportunities works with Joanne Balachak in Waterbury Thursday. Rybczyk took over for Jim Gatling. Steven Valenti Republican-American

WATERBURY — There's a new opportunity for William Rybczyk.

After spending his entire professional career at New Opportunities, Inc., Rybczyk was tapped to replace James Gatling, who retired last week after decades as the social service organization's president and CEO.

"There's no replacing Gatling," Rybczyk said. "You don't just walk in and replicate 42 years of experience and the legacy that he's had. What you can do, is gain what you've learned during that time."

He said he worked directly with Gatling for the past decade.

"I've been able to gain valuable insight about communicating with people, bringing people to the table, partnering, being able to communicate and convey the importance of the work being done by the agency," he said. "The things that served him well are the same kind of things that can guide me."

After graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in communication, Rybczyk, 46, served two years with AmeriCorps.



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It was through that organization, he said, he became involved with New Opportunities, leading a team that developed service projects for what was then Ancestors Community Charter High School.

That school closed in 2001.

He then spent a decade planning and creating services and programs for New Opportunities, including youth employment programs.

From 2010 until being named president and CEO, Rybczyk was New Opportunities' director of research development and planning, leading the team that sought funding for 55 agency programs, and another that developed software that captured client demographics and tracked their progress.

In that role he also led New Opportunities' Torrington and Meriden operations, and analyzed data for grant applications, reports and more.

"It was great experience for me because... I was able to get a vantage point of all the things the agency was doing," he said, adding he was involved with programs that provided fuel assistance, services for seniors and more.

He also was involved with a program that helped the poor save and manage their money, he said.

"The basic idea was providing financial education," he said. "People were able to set a savings goal. Whether it was \$1,000, \$1,500 or \$2,000, the agency matched \$2 for every dollar the participant saved. They were able to purchase their first home, start a small business, pay for post-secondary education or purchase a vehicle for transportation to employment."

Rybczyk said he also started the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at the agency.

"Bill's heartfelt commitment to the customers and communities we serve really exemplifies the work New Opportunities has maintained since it was founded," Gatling said of Rybczyk's appointment. "Bill's well suited to lead New Opportunities so that the communities and customers continue to receive the services they need, as well as being a strong advocate for those services."

Rybczyk was appointed after a national search by the organization’s board of directors. Raised in Torrington, he lives in Seymour with his wife, Cynthia.

According to the agency’s 2018 tax filing, Gatling was making a total of \$363,966 in combined compensation as head of the organization. Rybczyk was compensated \$112,132 for his role as director of research and development during that same tax year, according to the filing.

When asked for his current salary, Rybczyk said he would call a reporter back, but did not call again by press time.

“My plan is to send something out to the staff... being able to communicate with staff, being able to share how much I care about the agency, how much I’m appreciative of what they do for us day in and day out,” he said. “And maybe reinforcing that it’s not an April Fools joke... Gatling is actually leaving.”

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