Community House Board of Director member ‘Making a Difference’ as Pauline Lang award winner

Grace Hendricks: a long record of service to agency, family and city

There are nearly 30 West Haven Community House Board of Directors and among them is lifelong West Haven resident Grace Hendricks, a mother of four grown daughters, 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Married in 1952 to the late Jim Hendricks, Grace is an active member of the Head Start Policy Council, the Head Start Committee, the Fund Development and Events committees, and the Personnel Committee. She recalls how one of her great-granddaughters attended the Community House's Head Start program recently and it was "wonderful the way she adapted and learned from the program."

Her volunteerism here was acknowledged when Hendricks was named the 2011 Pauline Lang Exceptional Board Member Award winner.

Hendricks recalls a happy childhood and family life growing up in West Haven with “wonderful, hard-working parents.” Indeed, they must have been hard-working as Grace grew up with three brothers and eight sisters.

She attended Stiles School and West Haven High School, and prior to having a family, she worked in the office at Armstrong Rubber Co. Later, she became an assistant registrar of voters at West Haven City Hall, worked for the CT Savings Bank before becoming a paraprofessional for the West Haven Board of Education. She retired in 1997.

Her work on the Community House board is just part of her long resume as a volunteer. Grace was active in the St. Lawrence Mother’s Club, is past president of the St. Therese’s Guild of St. Lawrence Church, and in 2001 when her husband passed away, she was asked to continue his term on the West Haven Board of Police Commissioners, a position she held for 10 years.

Sadly, she lost a daughter in 2008 from brain cancer, which prompted her to become active raising funds for cancer research including the “Relay for Life” and yearly coat sale.

When asked what she liked about West Haven, Grace said, “First of all, I love the beaches and shorefront. West Haven is not large in area but we have a great population of friendly people,” she said. Hendricks also lauded the city’s Green, police station, fire and police departments and “our great schools.”

She is an active Democrat, with both her late husband and her daughter, Kathleen, being former members of the City Council. Among her hobbies and favorites pastimes are current events, politics, cooking, volunteering and spending time with “my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.”

She credits her late husband as her mentor. “He had the faith and ability to show me how to be more confident in myself. He helped me to be the strong person I am today.”

Reflecting on her service on the board, she said, “the Community House has many wonderful programs … There are a variety of people in the city who need social services. I find the West Haven Community House to be well equipped to deliver these services, and it is an honor and privilege to be part of the agency all these years.”

“We’re helping those who cannot help themselves and giving a push to those who can. We’ve done it by working together for a common purpose. I see no reason to stop now. “

~ Jane D. Hull