Community House presents annual awards; Grace Hendricks named Lang Award winner

WEST HAVEN (June 27, 2011) – Several local businesses and individuals were honored on June 23 at the West Haven Community House’s Annual Meeting held at the local not-for-profit’s program room on Elm Street.

Among the award winners were local businesses Allied Rehabilitation Services and TD Bank, Community House board member Michaele Morales and Stop & Shop’s Mark Smolenski, Anita Pagogna from the “Clothes Closet” at our Our Lady of Victory Church, the West Haven Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Neil Cavallaro, and board member Grace Hendricks.

Community House Board President Richard Bruno welcomed the more than 60 parents, staff, business and local officials on hand and noted that the agency could not provide the quality of services it does without the concerted efforts of those like the award winners begin cited today.

Bruno then presented the first award to Grace Hendricks, a retired paraprofessional at Carrigan School and current member of the West Haven Police Commission.

“In 1995, the Pauline Lang Exceptional Board Member Award was established to honor our founder, Pauline Lang,” Bruno said.

“The award recipient is given to acknowledge outstanding service to the agency by a member of the Board of Directors of the Community House.”

Past Award recipients include Patricia Herbert, Bill Burns, Helen Dorsi, Bernice Kaercher, Carole Porto, Mary Proto, Ken Ginsberg, Richard Brown, Tom Williams, Sharon Martin, Bruno, Gene Sullivan, Ken Prisco, Stacie Phan and last year’s awardee, Cheryl Milano.
“This year, we are very pleased to honor another excellent member of our Board who has been involved with us for many, many years,” Bruno said.

“Much like the founder of agency, Grace has been a ground breaker and a mover-and-shaker along many fronts in her long local career.

“As one board member noted recently, Grace ‘is one of the Board members who seems to be consistently involved in everything we do. She is always volunteering and attending events … and she really stands out in her personal investment to the Community House.’”

Community House Executive Director Patty Stevens then took to the podium to introduce the next award winners.

Glen Gitterman accepted an award on behalf of Allied Rehabilitation Services for providing physical and occupational therapy to many of our adult clients in a professional and caring manner, and for being a good neighbor to the Community Connections site adjacent on Campbell Avenue.

“We always know that when Allied Rehabilitation Services is involved with a Community House client that they are in good hands.”

Next, Claudia Negro, the Assistant Vice President and bank manager at the TD Bank branch on Campbell Avenue, was on hand to accept an award for support and advocacy.

Adults with disabilities have financial and banking needs, and “Claudia is here to accept an award for TD Bank’s special work in understanding the challenges that people with disabilities have and for meeting their financial and banking needs with care and compassion.

“Whenever a client has a problem or special need with respect to their finances, it is comforting to our Community House staff and to the family members of our residential
and Community Connections clients to know that the professionals at TD Bank are there to help.”

The next awardee was Michaele Morales and Stop & Shop’s Mark Smolenski

“We are pleased to honor Michaele today for her advocacy, support and help in obtaining special equipment that assists our clients in learning needed tasks, thus helping to ensure that they keep their jobs working in grocery stores.

“Michaele was vital in bringing in special bagging and cart equipment that helped adults with disabilities perform their duties better, which helped many of these workers keep these jobs.”

Michaele was supported each step of the way by Smolenski at Stop & Shop of West Haven, which for many years has been an industry leader in the employment and training of adults with disabilities.

“Mark and the management at Stop & Shop are being honored here today for their advocacy and positive philosophy that people have ‘abilities first.’ Not only have Mark and Stop & Shop promoted this philosophy, but they actual practice it through its employment of people with disabilities.”

Also on hand to receive an award was Anita Pagogna from Our Lady of Victory Church, St. John Vianney “Clothes Closet.”

“Our Lady of Victory Church’s “Beacon on the Hill” program has done so much on behalf of the Community House, its clients and programs. The Beacon on the Hill ‘Clothes Closet’ program provides secondhand clothing in a store-like environment where people in need can ‘shop’ for free.

“Anita has been a blessing to our programs and clients. She is very accommodating and allows us to arrange special days when our Head Start families can shop for clothes. She also allows our family workers to make appointments to
visit the Clothing Closet with Head Start families and to assist them with their ‘shopping.’”

The final awards went to Superintendent of Schools Neil Cavallaro and the West Haven Board of Education.

“When you are in the business of caring for children, the key to any successful program is to have strong and committed partners. The Community House is fortunate indeed to have as one of its partners the West Haven public school system, and in particular to have the strong support of top school administrators, individual school principals, school staff, and the West Haven Board of Education,” Stevens said.

“Here in West Haven, the Community House simply could not offer its school-aged programs including School-Aged Child Care (SACC), Kinder Klub, Kids in the Neighborhood (KIN) or CHAMPS after-school enrichment programs without the cooperation and indeed, the full fledged support of the school system.”

Therefore, for outstanding support of our mission, services and programs – and for welcoming us into the schools and working with us to provide the very much needed before- and after-school programming – we acknowledge and cite Supt. Cavallaro and the West Haven Board of Education for its continuing role in helping West Haven children excel and succeed.”

West Haven Supt. of Schools Neil Cavallaro receives his award from child care program family Kim Febbriello and her children, Ben, Harrison, Sam and Olivia.

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