Community House’s just concluded fiscal year: Bruno cites accomplishments, balanced budget

WEST HAVEN (June 30, 2012) – The West Haven Community House marked the end of its 71st year serving the city with its Annual Meeting recently, where Board President Richard S. Bruno presided over the honoring of financial supporters and others.

In his remarks, Bruno noted that earlier in April 2012, the 100th anniversary of the tragic sinking of the Titanic was marked, a disaster that will forever be remembered in history because of one tragic omission: while it had more than enough individual “life belts” for its passengers, it had insufficient “lifeboats.”

“Tragically, the result was that 1,500 people died, most in the frigid waters of the north Atlantic and nearly all wearing their life belts,” Bruno said.

“Sitting here this evening, you may be asking yourself, ‘Why is he talking about the Titanic?’ But the answer is quite simple.

“In a metaphorical sense, we here at the West Haven Community House provide vital ‘life belts’ to many people in our community.

“For the parents who want their young child to get ahead in their early schooling, our Head Start program is a ‘life belt’ to a better education.

“For working parents who have few child care options both before and after school, our School Age Child Care program is a ‘life belt,’ giving parents and guardians peace of mind that their child is in a safe place, and productively
interacting with caring adults helping them master educational and social skills – all while having fun,” Bruno noted.

“For the family of a learning-disabled adult, our Community Connections day program provides a safe, caring environment where life skills are learned – a veritable ‘life belt’ of increased community interaction and integration.

“And similarly for our learning disabled adults who live in one of our supported homes or apartments, the Community House represents a ‘life belt’ toward more independent living,” Bruno said.

“Yet, as we gather here today to celebrate another successful year of serving the West Haven community, it is increasingly clear to me that despite the presence of our ‘life belt’ programs and services, it remains vitally necessary for the agency to have more ‘lifeboats’ – in the form of longtime financial supporters, like those we are honoring here this evening.

“For while it is true that a ‘life belt’ is an important piece of safety equipment to have, it is also true that those fortunate enough to benefit from a ‘lifeboat’ have a much better chance at surviving in the turbulent, treacherous and bitter cold ‘seas of life,’” Bruno said.

Bruno and Executive Director Patty Stevens then cited the agency’s 2012 “Friends Forever” award winners, including ConnectiCare, United Illuminating Co., the Southern CT Gas Co., NewAlliance Foundation, First Niagara Bank, Webster Bank, Bank of America, Winkle Bus Co., Rose & Kiernan and Dave McDermott Auto Group for its continuing support of the agency.

“These faithful, long-time donors,” Bruno said, “are among our fleet of ‘lifeboat’ supporters, helping us keep our doors open and our programs financially ‘afloat.’

“Therefore, on behalf of the board, our management team and staff, we thank all of you for your generosity through the years, and I might add, ‘We still need you!’”
Bruno also reported that fiscal year 2011-2012, ending on June 30, ended with a balanced budget. Other highlights of the recently concluded 2011-12 fiscal year, he said, included:

- Successful consolidation of the management of the Kids in the Neighborhood and School Age Child care programs.

- Continuing to address safety and security issues at all sites.

- Physical plant and capital improvements, including re-roofing the residential home at 228 Elm St., and re-siding the Savin Avenue home.

- Head Start completing its first year with a new director, the first in nearly 30 years, and successfully completing its self-assessment.

- Growing partnerships with the city of West Haven, the West Haven Board of Education, the city’s Health Department, the United Way of Greater New Haven, and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, among others.

- Special event successes, including the “A Night at the Races” special event in April 2012, which was the largest ever.

“These, and other continuing improvements and agency initiatives are providing positive momentum as we enter yet another fiscal year at the Community House, our 72nd since our founding on 1942,” Bruno said.

“So in conclusion, I salute all of you who have partnered with us, and especially our ‘lifeboat’ supporters, without whom we might otherwise be stranded, literally on a cold ocean of ill-fortune, without a life raft or paddle to rely on.

“You are our ‘Friends Forever.’”