Friends gather at Community House for Pat Herbert’s 95th birthday party

WEST HAVEN (August 26, 2013) – Friends, neighbors, associates and a handful of city officials gathered at the West Haven Community House recently to celebrate long-time West Haven resident Patricia Herbert’s 95th birthday with cake and good cheer all around.

A chorus of Community House staff sang ‘Happy Birthday,’ with one staff person, Tanya Charles, performing a special solo rendition, while West Haven Mayor John Picard presented Herbert with a special proclamation marking the special occasion.

It read,

“Be it hereby known to all that the City of West Haven hereby offers its sincerest congratulations to Pat Herbert in recognition of the celebration of your 95th birthday milestone: 1918-2013. The entire city extends its very best wishes on this memorable occasion. Given on this 20th day of August 2013, West Haven, Connecticut, by John M. Picard, Mayor.”

Of course, there were gifts and a decorated cake, among other goodies.

Herbert is a longtime resident and member of the Community House’s board of directors as well as a past board president. To Herbert – a retired school teacher – her former school students, her colleagues at the Community House going back more than 40 years and many others throughout West Haven have served as her extended family.

Herbert never married, and when asked “why?” for a story in a recent agency Annual Report, Pat said with a twinkle in her eye, “It is simple – my being able to say ‘no.’”
Herbert has served many other organizations in her time, including the West Haven Library, Girl Scouts, the city’s Board of Education, several civic and religious groups and as a founding member of the West Haven Land Trust.

At the Community House these days, Herbert is most active on the Endowment Committee, and she continues to urge the general community to support the endowment through planned giving gifts. The Community House endowment fund is approaching $500,000 in total assets.

Community House Board member Sharon Martin, herself a former board president, recently marveled at Pat’s commitments and achievements. “To me, her commitment to the Community House and its work is unmatched for anybody over that length of time.

“Particularly moving to me is that Pat never loses sight of the real purpose of the Community House, which is helping people. I can still hear her say, ‘If we don’t take care of each other, who will?’ and I think that sentiment sums up what Pat is all about. She’s just phenomenal.”

Former Community House Executive Director Peter Schwartz is another who sings the praises of Pat’s lifetime work and commitment to West Haven and its people. “A really good example of Pat’s everlasting contributions to the Community House was her role of helping to establish our before-and-after school child care program as a true partnership with the West Haven Board of Education,” Schwartz said.
“Our program’s ability to serve such large numbers of West Haven children is based upon the Board of Education’s decision to allow us to use school buildings after school for our program. It was Pat Herbert, as a member of the Board of Education, who helped the educators understand the tremendous benefit to the children of West Haven and to the school system itself to have our program operate directly in as many public schools as possible.”

After Community House staff from the before and after school child care program sang a group “Happy Birthday” to her, it was time to blow out the candles, and eat cake.

And after the festivities were over, just to show that Herbert still has “a teacher’s eye for detail,” as she was walking outside the Elm Street facility to get her ride back home at West Walk, she pointed over to the front gardens on the grounds and said to Executive Director Patty Stevens, “You know, someone should cut that weed out of the bush there.”

Pat Herbert certainly still has it! Happy birthday, and many happy returns!

- 30 -