

Central CT Chambers of Commerce holds 131st annual dinner

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PLANTSVILLE – Guests, entrepreneurs and dignitaries gathered in the Aqua Turf Club Thursday evening to celebrate the achievements of area businesses at the 131st Central Chambers of Connecticut Annual Dinner. One of those honorees was the E. Bartlett Barnes Distinguished Service award recipient Nancy O'Donnell.

CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation Susan Sadecki shared a few words surrounding O'Donnell's background and the award.



Dean Wright | Staff

“The chambers’ highest award is presented annually to an individual who exemplifies the spirit, integrity, character, leadership and enthusiasm of one of Bristol’s greatest community and business pillars,” said Sadecki. “Bart Barnes was the owner and publisher of the Bristol Press for many years, but beyond his commitment to impeccable journalistic integrity, he got personally involved in all aspects of the community, including participation and leadership of several civic and social organizations.”

Sadecki said that if individuals knew O'Donnell and had the opportunity to work beside her, “You would know that she has given back to her community in the same distinguished manner as Bart Barnes and her service has no limit.”

Sadecki said that O'Donnell's service to the community first began with the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce when she was transferred to the Terryville branch of Bristol Federal Savings and Loan. She was noted for serving in every officer position there before volunteering with the United Way of West Central Connecticut and being honored with the Lou Bachman Award. She is the current treasurer and past president of the Rotary Club of Terryville, is a trustee of the Bristol Hospital Foundation, member of the Main Street Community Foundation Distribution Committee and advisory member of the Plymouth Century Club Fund. She is a founding member of the Plymouth Community Food Pantry. O'Donnell currently serves as the senior vice president and chief risk officer for Thomaston Savings Bank. She shares four children with her husband, Jim.

“I could go on and on,” said Sadecki. “You can see Nancy has touched many communities and many, many lives.”

In keeping with a tradition with the Chambers’ donor advice fund at the Main Street Community Foundation to recommend grants to local charitable organizations, O'Donnell has selected that Bristol Hospital will receive a \$1,000 grant designated for its emergency center project.

O'Donnell thanked her colleagues and supporters and congratulated all the other award recipients of the evening.

“I’m really pleased to be able to designate the grant money towards the Bristol Hospital Emergency Center expansion,” said O’Donnell. “We are very fortunate to have a state-of-the-art facility like the Bristol ER in our community.”

O’Donnell shared an experience she had with the Bristol Hospital when she and her husband both tested positive and developed symptoms with covid-19 in February. She said she felt she was treated like the only patient at the facility when she attended and lauded the personal service she received.

“I’m truly honored to accept this really prestigious award,” said O’Donnell. “It’s not something I could have done on my own. I could not have done it without all of you.”

She said she remembered when she was elected to serve as president of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and felt the challenges of the duty.

“Then I had an ‘Aha’ moment,” said the award recipient. “I don’t have to do it alone. I have people I can rely on and committee members and they’re all going to help me. That’s to me the best part about volunteering, all of the help and all of the teamwork you get from everyone in the community. I met so many people along the way that I can count on as friends. People that I probably would have never gotten to know had I not volunteered.”

Among other community groups recognized at the event, the Barnes Group Foundation was recognized with the Special Recognition Award. The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine was recognized with the Distinguished Business of the Year Award. Outstanding Community Business Award recipients included AMP Radio Network, Burlington Insurance Agency, Connecticut Spring and Stamping, DACRUZ Manufacturing, OneSource Printing and Graphics as well as Sandy’s TV and Appliance.