

Donna Osuch receives E. Bartlett Barnes Distinguished Service Award

Published: Thursday, 2 June 2022 15:34

@DeanIWright

In keeping with the high ideals of civic service and love of community, the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce presented United Way of West Central Connecticut President Donna Osuch with the organization's highest honor, the E. Bartlett Barnes Distinguished Service Award.

During the Wednesday night 132nd Annual Dinner of the Chambers at Aqua Turf in Southington, a number of businesses from across Bristol, Burlington, Farmington, Plainville, Plymouth, Wolcott and more were recognized for their contributions and innovation in the region with Osuch's award capping the end of the evening.



Dean Wright | Staff President of the United Way of West Central Connecticut Donna Osuch speaks on the importance of community connections in providing United Way services.

“The Chamber’s 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 Susan Sadecki, president of the Main Street Community Foundation.

Barnes was a past owner and publisher of The Bristol Press. He was noted for his support of several civic organizations and business relationships before the award was named after him.

“If you know her, you would agree that she was born to live a life of service, and like Bart, she has also motivated others to get involved and ‘live united,’ whether that action is in your professional or personal life and although that tagline ‘Live United’ may be associated with the United Way, I would argue that donna would have promoted that anyways just by the way she gives back to her community,” said Sadecki.

Osuch moved to Connecticut from New York when 12. She was active in student life in her youth and carried that on into her college years. She worked as a preschool teacher and advocate of affordable childcare and as a community impact coordinator at the United Way before being appointed president and chief professional officer in 2009. She served on the Bristol American Rescue Plan Task Force, is a corporator for Bristol Hospital and sits on the Productions for Change and Bristol Business Education Foundation board of directors. Among her other contributions, Osuch served on the Methodius Orthodox Church Parish Council, Bristol Preschool Child Care Center Board of Directors, Bristol Central High School Governance Council and Grad Committee as well as on the United Way of Connecticut Board of Directors.

“Donna is that neighbor you want at work and at home,” continued Sadecki. “She’s a true friend and dependable and she moves about her world always with a smile. She’s the first person you think to call because she knows how to lead and mobilize people.”

Sadecki highlighted Osuch's contributions for leading organizational efforts to provide food relief and supplies to area families in need by means of the Farmers to Families Produce Distribution Program throughout the pandemic in the past year.

The United Way president thanked supporters in choosing her for the honor.

"That's my theme tonight, which is connections. I know I only stand here before you tonight because of my connections to all of you," said Osuch.

She continued saying United Way could not do its work without the support of the business community, the nonprofit community, municipal and education leaders and countless donors and volunteers.

"United Way does its best work by connecting resources to needs, by connecting people to problems, by really connecting our community," Osuch said.

Over the 16 months the Farmers to Families Produce Distribution Program was held, 437 volunteers gave 1,311 hours to distribute 35,505 boxes of food weighing over 1.1 million pounds and worth \$1.5 million in support to area residents.

Other entities recognized throughout the evening with the Outstanding Community Businesses Award included Family Roots Product Market, Greenhouse Cafe and Tavern, Hill-Stead Museum, Laurentano Sign Group, Plainville Funeral Home and Tim Bobroske Construction.

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association received the Special Recognition Award and Bauer, Inc. was recognized with the Distinguished Business of the Year Award.