



BUSINESS

Annual chamber dinner awards set for June 5

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The Bristol Chamber of Commerce is preparing for its 130th Annual Awards Dinner next Wednesday, June 5.

At the event planned for the Aqua Turf in Plantsville, several awards will be presented to individuals and organizations that work tirelessly to make improvements throughout the community, and one new award will also be presented this year.

Receiving the E. Bartlett Barnes Distinguished Service Award is Kurt Barwis, president and CEO of Bristol Health (formerly known as Bristol Hospital and Health Care Group). Barwis has more than 40 years worth of management and leadership experience in community hospitals, management consulting, and entrepreneurial business environments.

President of the chamber, Cindy Bombard, said Bristol is “very fortunate to have his leadership skills right here in Bristol, to keep Bristol the number one hospital (in the area).” She said Barwis was nominated for this award not only for what he does for Bristol Hospital, but because of what he does for healthcare in general.

“He’s not just an advocate here that we all know at Bristol Hospital,” said Bombard. “Behind the scenes he’s a part of CHA (Connecticut Hospital Association), but he’s also at the state capitol lobbying... for healthcare for everyone, just healthcare in general, the survival of the hospitals.”

The Main Street Community Foundation will be presented the Special Recognition Award. MSCF is a public charity focused on building permanent endowments to benefit the local community.

“The foundation itself is getting the award for all of the good work that they’ve done since they’ve been established, and the support that they give to the communities in which they service,” said Bombard. “They have many grant opportunities for the town in which they cover, and all of those grants do great things for the communities, and we’re very fortunate to have a foundation to that caliber that services our area.”

The Volunteer of the Year Award will be presented to Wanita Parent. Parent, according to chamber marketing and communications director Katie D’Agostino, is “literally behind the scenes on every single thing that she does, you’ll be hard pressed to actually see her pop her head out and actually see her in action.”

Parent’s volunteerism began at the age of 10, when her father was one of the founders for the Plymouth Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Today, she has volunteered with Bristol Hospital’s various fundraisers, served as the assistant treasurer of the Hospital Auxiliary, co-chair of the Holiday Ball, member of the Holiday Ball Committee, member of the golf tournament committee, member of the Festival of Wine and Spirits, was a member of the Imagine Nation Anniversary Gala Committee, the Bristol Boys and Girls Club Snow Ball Dance Committee, served as a member of the Main Street Community Foundation’s Women and Girls’ Fund Advisory Board, and many more.

The Bristol Quota Club will be presented the Spirit of Bristol Award. Quota International of Bristol, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, works with those less fortunate in the greater Bristol area by helping disadvantaged women and children, providing scholarships and volunteering.

Quota members can be found volunteering at community events such as Cambridge Park’s after school program, preparing and serving dinners at the Zion Lutheran soup kitchen, organizing blood drives for the Red Cross, and award scholarships to high school seniors.

Bombard described the Quota Club as women getting together to work for the betterment of their community. “It’s a group of people behind the scenes,” said Bombard, “doing wonderful things for the community.”

The Bristol Housing Authority will be presented the Outstanding Community Service Award. Established over 75 years ago, the BHA provides housing and various human services.

Bombard described the BHA as an agency that helps to provide “good, solid housing for families to get, either, back on their feet, to grow, to expand, in a community.”

"They're very personable people that meet with individuals that may need assistance and help guide them through a complicated system," said Bombard.

The Distinguished Business of the Year Award will be presented to Thomaston Savings Bank.

"They have taken a look at the demographics of the communities in which they service and they opened up two locations in Bristol – talk about adding to the footprint of economic development in the City of Bristol," said Bombard. "That's really investing in the community."

For the first time, the chamber will be presenting the Outstanding Youth Community Service Award, to be presented to the Bristol Central High School InterAct Club.

"The reason that we've done this is because we have all began to realize that our young people in our high schools, even in grammar schools, are our next leaders moving on up into our area," said Bombard.

Since many of these young people will grow up to become the leaders of tomorrow, D'Agostino explained, the Chamber has introduced a student sponsorship initiative.

"We want these kids at our dinner and we recognize that it might be a little cost prohibitive for them," said D'Agostino. "But, if they want to experience what it's like to be at a professional business dinner or network with these potential employers at some point in time, we do have an opportunity for someone in the public."

Community members can offer sponsorship, allowing the students of the BCHS InterAct Club to attend the event. Those interested in sponsoring should contact the chamber, (860) 584-4718.

Tickets are still available to attend the chamber's 130th Annual Awards Dinner, and can be found through the chamber website, www.centralctchambers.org.

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