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LOCAL NEWS

## Leading Ladies celebrate Hope Roecker

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Hope Roecker talks about her community involvement at the Leading Lady Luncheon at the Aqua Turf last week. (Photo by Janelle Morelli)

By SHERIDAN CYR

STAFF WRITER

The 2018 Leading Ladies event was an exciting and hilarious afternoon at the Aqua Turf on Oct. 12 as community members came together to offer their support for Leading Lady Hope Roecker and for the Leading

Ladies Immediate Assistance Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation.

Each year, one woman from the Southington community is selected and honored as the Leading Lady for her contributions through work, volunteerism or politics. Roecker came to town 25 years ago, and her impact has had a ripple effect ever since.

Her role in the community began when she got involved with the Southington Community YMCA. After that, she opened up her own business, "Lather & Laughs Dog Grooming," which quickly grew to include cleaning services and playtime for dogs.

Roecker's volunteering efforts include Southington Community Services, Bread for Life, Relay for Life, and many different fund raising events. In addition, her strong connection to First Congregational Church of Southington affords her opportunities to help others in the community and around the world.

"I wear a lot of hats in this community," Roecker said. "My heart is in this community. I left Southington for about a year and quickly came back. I knew I would be back because of the connections I've made and the lifelong relationships I've found. I'm very fortunate and very blessed."

Roecker's advice to women is to "Be who you are. Remember you are never alone. Women can conquer anything alone, and with the help of somebody else – forget it. We're an army of women."

Last year's Leading Lady, Diana Sheard, nominated Roecker for the award.



Sue Parsons won the Leading Ladies apple during the auction at the event. Money raised will help local women. (Photo by Janelle Morelli)



Hope Roecker is presented a necklace to mark the event. (Photo by Janelle Morelli)

"'Community' to me means a mosaic of people," Sheard said. She asked everyone to raise their hands if they're a business owner, volunteer, or consumer. "Hope Roecker has been a volunteer, and a business owner, and a consumer. She never stops moving: she's either shampooing a dog, walking a dog, cleaning a house, picking up a dog to babysit, helping, singing in a band, making chocolates for a fundraiser, or running a fundraiser."

The Leading Ladies event benefits the leading ladies immediate assistance fund to help girls and women in Southington. All proceeds and donations, along with the funds raised in an auction off of a hand-painted apple from Southington Community Cultural Arts' Apples & Arts

program, go towards the MSCF fund. Small grants are of up to \$500 are awarded to specific programs or one-time expenses that aid women and girls in need.

For additional information about the Leading Ladies program, visit [www.leadingladiesct.org](http://www.leadingladiesct.org).

To comment on this story or to contact staff writer Sheridan Cyr, email her at [SCyr@SouthingtonObserver.com](mailto:SCyr@SouthingtonObserver.com).



Hope Roecker's family came out to support her award. From left, Tyler Roecker, Rich Fillion, Hope Roecker, and Doyle Roecker.

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