

Person of the Year honored at annual YMCA meeting

By BRIAN M. JOHNSON STAFF WRITER | Posted: Wednesday, February 1, 2017 9:22 pm

SOUTHINGTON — The Southington-Cheshire Community YMCA honored Benny Cammuso as its Person of the Year as well as other community volunteers Wednesday at its 88th Annual Meeting at the Aqua Turf Club.

Hundreds of YMCA members and supporters, including town government and educational leaders, gathered at the meeting titled “Forever Young” to honor those recognized for embodying the values of the YMCA and for making a difference in the community and the lives of others. The idea was that by staying connected, one remained “forever young.” Y members later sang the Rod Stewart song of the same name in a duet.

The dining room was decked out with red balloons as video screens played iconic commercials and soft, crooning music greeted guests as they walked in.

Jim Myers, executive director of YMCA, and Joe Eddy, YMCA Board President, welcomed the guests and acknowledged the community and YMCA leaders.

“It’s always great to come together to honor those who provide great service to the community,” said Myers.

The first award presented was the Youth Leadership award, created to recognize two teens displaying leadership qualities and making a difference in the community, was received by Catherine Kates and Morgan Maccione. Both have volunteered with the Southington STEPS Coalition, an organization aimed at preventing youth substance abuse.

“I can honestly say volunteering has made me a more compassionate, caring person,” said Maccione. “It helped me to step outside of my comfort zone to help others.”

Maccione also volunteers to help special needs students.

Later, Cammuso was honored as Person of the Year for regularly volunteering at Bread for Life, where he cooks, cleans, washes dishes and delivers meals for the homebound. He also served on the Senior Citizens Commission and the emergency response team, the Southington Care Center and the Red Cross bookmobile. He is also a member of AARP, the Freemasons and the Knights of Columbus.

Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation, also presented the local YMCA with a check from the Bradley Barnes Memorial Trust for \$62,500 to improve the trail at YMCA Camp Sloper and make it accessible for people of abilities and to install exercise stations around it.



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2/1/2017 Mike Orazzi | Staff YMCA
Person of the Year Benny Cammuso (left) and William Lewandoski (right) during the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCA's 88th Annual Meeting held at the Aqua Turf Club Wednesday evening.

“Camp Sloper is a beautiful property and it is our mission to improve the lives and health of the people in Southington,” said Sadecki. “Bradley Barnes was very clear in his will that he wanted his trust to be used to improve the community.”

The Youth Development Award was presented to Joe Crispino, who has dedicated 30 years of service to the Southington Cheshire Community YMCA.

The Healthy Living Award went to the L.E.A.F organization, which stands for the Lewis Educational Agriculture Farm. Named after the 230-year-old Lewis family in town, the farm provides hands-on agricultural experience for local youth.

The Social Responsibility Award was given to “Ben Was Here,” an organization founded in 2014 in memory of Benjamin Buckley — a young boy who died at seven years old of a severe asthma attack — by his parents Jeff and Cristin Buckley. The charity is dedicated to giving back to schools, community youth organizations and asthma-related education.

Proclamations were presented to each recipient by members of the Southington Town Council.

Hartford HealthCare was the event’s premium sponsor.

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