Community Collaborative Aims to Improve Health and Wellness of Stamford Residents

Family Centers has joined Charter Oak Communities, Stamford Hospital and other local organizations to form a community collaborative dedicated to improving the wellness education, access to healthcare, economic self-sufficiency and general quality-of-life for Stamford residents.

The Stamford Community Collaborative will coordinate services and outreach efforts in conjunction with the Vita Health & Wellness District, which is focused on improving the overall health of the people who live and work on Stamford’s West Side.

“Community engagement is integral to our success,” said Vin Tufo, executive director and CEO of Charter Oak Communities. “With sensitivity to differences in socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, our goal is to facilitate a vision that brings better health to all in a culturally competent way. The needs and concerns expressed by the people who live and work in the community will shape everything we do.”

The Collaborative is initially focused on two specific census tracts in Stamford (214 and 215) that comprise the Vita Health & Wellness District. This neighborhood was identified as an initial priority due to its disproportionate share of chronic diseases, based on the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment conducted by Stamford Hospital and the Stamford Department of Health and Social Services. The plan is to eventually expand the program to other parts of the City.

Family Centers’ Director of Clinical and Outreach Services Leslie Sexer was recently named Vita Administrator. In this new role Leslie will oversee the implementation of the Vita Health & Wellness Initiative, and work closely with the community partners as the initiative evolves.

For more information on the Vita Health & Wellness District, visit www.vitastamford.org.

TISHMAN NAMED MANAGER OF CLINICAL SERVICES FOR DARIEN AND NEW CANAAN

Erin Tishman, LPC was recently appointed Manager of Clinical Services for Darien and New Canaan. In her new role, Tishman will oversee all counseling programs serving the Darien and New Canaan communities, including the Center for HOPE and The Den for Grieving Kids. Erin will also work with a number of government, school and civic groups on initiatives to better meet the mental health needs of these towns.

Erin joined Family Centers in 2012 as a contract clinician. In 2013, she was hired full-time as a Clinical Supervisor. She earned a Bachelor’s of Arts in Psychology from St. Michael’s College. She also holds a Master’s in Counseling Psychology from Rosemont College. Erin is specially trained in the treatment of trauma, including Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, as well as in anxiety, depression, marriage and family and group therapy.

In 2014, nearly 750 residents received clinical services through our 590 Post Road offices in Darien. In all, almost 800 individual therapy sessions and more than 400 group sessions were provided.
The Center for HOPE welcomes Academy Award-nominated actress Mariel Hemingway as the speaker for its 2015 Annual Luncheon on Wednesday, April 8. The event will be held at 11 a.m. at the Country Club of Darien.

Hemingway is best known for roles in such films as Superman IV: The Quest for Peace, Personal Best and Woody Allen’s Manhattan, for which she was nominated for the Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 1979.

In her new memoir, Out Came The Sun, Hemingway shares in candid detail the story of her troubled childhood in a famous family haunted by depression, alcoholism, illness and suicide. She also reveals her painful struggle to stay sane as the youngest child in her family, and how she coped with the chaos by becoming OCD and obsessive about her food, schedule and organization.

The 2015 Center for HOPE Luncheon is co-chaired by Barbara Epifanio, Heather Pech and Terri Walker.

Tickets start at $125, and all proceeds from the event will benefit the Center for HOPE and The Den for Grieving Kids, Family Centers’ programs offering counseling and support to residents of lower Fairfield County coping with a loss, a critical illness or life-altering circumstance.

Visit www.centerforhope.org for tickets or sponsorship information.

On January 23, students from Greenwich’s First Presbyterian Church Bridges to Learning preschool class visited the Head Start and School Readiness classrooms at Armstrong Court to create a special Valentine’s Day craft.

Ten Bridges to Learning students worked side by side with the 63 students at the Armstrong Court site on Valentine-themed picture frames that the children could give to their parents. Volunteers from First Presbyterian Church also took each child’s photo, which was inserted into the finished product. After completing the project, all children enjoyed a story and snack courtesy of First Presbyterian Church.

For the past four years, First Presbyterian Church has partnered with Family Centers on outreach projects to help enrich the community engagement opportunities available to its parishioners. The Church will work on another project with Family Centers this spring.
Welch, Ailes to Headline “Titans” Speaker Series

They’re innovators, newsmakers and influencers. But above all else, they’re “Titans” of their respective industries.

Family Centers is proud to present former General Electric (GE) CEO and Chairman Jack Welch and FOX News Chairman/CEO and Fox Television Stations Chairman Roger Ailes as the latest speakers in its Titans Series. This special group of fundraising events will allow attendees to gain first-hand insight from America’s greatest leaders.

The spring series kicks off on April 15 with Welch and his wife, Suzy. Fresh off the release of their latest book, The Real-Life MBA, the Welches will outline their modern, essential guide for business and explore the most pressing challenges related to creating winning strategies, leading and managing others and building a thriving career.

Under Welch’s direction, GE became the world’s most valuable corporation and was consistently voted the most admired company in the world by Fortune magazine. Since 2001, Welch has been extremely active in private equity and consulting. Along with speaking to upwards of a million people around the world, Welch has also used his post-GE years to found and lead the Jack Welch Management Institute. In 2014, he was named to CNBC’s Top 10 “Rebels, Icons and Leaders” of the past 25 years.

Suzy Welch is a best-selling author, television commentator and noted business journalist. She has spent several years at the management consulting firm Bain & Company, served as editor of the Harvard Business Review and wrote a work-life column for O: The Oprah Magazine.

Ailes will then take to the podium June 25. Since joining FOX News in 1996, Ailes created FOX’s first weekly public affairs show, FOX News Sunday, and oversaw the successful launch of FOX News Channel, the fastest growing news network in the country. Ailes has been recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of America’s Best Leaders in 2005.

Both events will take place at 7:30 a.m. at the Hilton Hotel, located at First Stamford Plaza in Stamford. For ticket and sponsorship information, visit www.familycenters.org.
Former CIA Acting Director Jack Devine treated an audience of more than 200 to some “inside intel” into the missions that shaped his 30-year career at the secretive government agency during a fundraising breakfast on Dec. 12.

The event, which was held at the Greenwich Hyatt Regency and co-chaired by Jan Dilenschneider and Linda McMahon, helped raise $70,000 for Family Centers’ programs that provide counseling and support to families and individuals facing a crisis.

In addition to providing his perspectives on the CIA’s role in such global events as the fall of Salvador Allende in Chile, the Iran-Contra affair and the covert conflict against the Soviets in Afghanistan famously depicted in the film, Charlie Wilson’s War, Devine also weighed in on recent reports that CIA operatives had used torture during interrogations post 9/11.

“If I had been in charge I would not have authorized the use of torture,” he said. “It matters around the world how we are seen. Don’t underestimate just how powerful democratic civil liberties and the democratic process is.”

Devine’s memoir, Good Hunting! An American Spymaster’s Story outlines his 32 years with the CIA. Over the years, Devine was involved in organizing, planning and executing countless sensitive projects in virtually all areas of intelligence, including analysis, operations, technology and management. In addition to serving as Acting Director, Devine headed the CIA’s Counternarcotics Center and oversaw the Afghan Task Force and operations in Latin America. In 1987, he was awarded the CIA’s Meritorious Officer Award for countering Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.
Strengthening the Community Through Collaboration

Thanks to a 12-year partnership with Charter Oak Communities, Family Centers has made great strides in strengthening the overall self-sufficiency and community support available to Stamford residents living in public housing. In addition to the onsite supportive services at all Charter Oak Communities’ housing sites, Family Centers’ Resident Service Coordinators regularly hold vocational training, computer classes, health and wellness programs and counseling services at multiple locations throughout the city. These services are offered free of charge, and are available to all Charter Oak Communities residents.

In order to improve on this work, Family Centers’ Resident Service Coordinators and Charter Oak Communities’ Property Managers have created opportunities for resident leadership throughout the Stamford community. For the past year, Property Managers and Resident Service Coordinators have participated in a number of work groups and trainings to implement initiatives designed to engage and give residents of public housing a voice in the community. Some examples of these initiatives include the re-development of the East Side Tenant Association, the creation of on-site food pantries, winter clothing drives and a resident-led neighborhood watch.

These efforts have already generated rave reviews. Residents regularly comment that there is an increased sense of support, a heightened appreciation for their neighbors and an overall improvement in their quality of life.

For more information on Family Centers’ partnership with Charter Oak Communities, visit www.familycenters.org.
Lesly Sandoval

When Lesly Sandoval started her sophomore year, she was just like any other student at Stamford High School. In between studying for exams and writing papers, Lesly kept a busy social life and participated in various extra-curricular activities. Despite her seemingly hectic schedule, Lesly constantly strived to strike a balance between her school and personal lives. However, it wouldn’t be long before her world was turned upside down.

Midway through the school year, Lesly learned she was pregnant. After coping with the initial shock of becoming a mother at 16, Lesly decided she needed to tell her parents. The news wasn’t received as well as she had hoped. Disappointed and angry that their daughter’s future was in jeopardy, Lesly’s parents asked her to leave home. But while her boyfriend’s family agreed to take her in, Lesly never felt more alone.

These feelings of loneliness and isolation only grew more intense once her classmates discovered she was expecting a baby. While she tried to ignore them, Lesly couldn’t help but notice other students’ hushed voices and judgmental looks as she walked the halls. To make matters worse, the school/life balance she worked so hard at was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

Lesly found out she was expecting twins shortly after her first trimester, and regular medical appointments forced her to miss a significant amount of school. Despite her best efforts, she was falling farther and farther behind.

Sensing she could benefit from being around others who understand what she was going through, a school counselor suggested Lesly join the Young Parents Program (YPP) group at school. Lesly was apprehensive at first, but she soon found a support network she needed in the group’s five other girls. Over the next few months, they laughed and cried together while sharing their fears, excitement and uncertainty of becoming mothers.

A YPP coordinator also came to Lesly’s home on a regular basis to meet with her one-on-one and answer any child development or parenting questions she had. The coordinator also helped Lesly prepare her home for the babies’ arrival, and even secured donated cribs and other nursery furniture.

Now that her sons, Jaden and Jacob, are here, Lesly continues to lean on Family Centers for guidance as she adjusts to her new role as a mother. She recently enrolled in the Nurturing Families Network – a program that offers support and education to first-time parents. YPP has also been instrumental in helping Lesly patch up the relationship with her parents and make plans for the future.

“Family Centers was there for me when I needed help the most,” she said. “I was scared, alone and unsure I’d be a good mother. But the Young Parents Program showed me that I can be there for my boys and follow my dreams of being a therapist one day.”
Family Centers fondly remembers the incredible presence, passion and dynamic personality of Gini Bantle, who passed away this winter after a long illness. Gini joined the Board of Directors of The Family Center in 1989, and was a driving force behind the agency's steady growth in the early 1990's. In addition to assisting with the merger of The Family Center and Family and Children's Services, Gini played a major role in securing the $2.6 million needed to purchase the counseling offices located at 20 Bridge Street in Greenwich.

Gini also worked hard to ensure that Family Centers' buildings stayed in tip-top shape. As a member of the Facilities Committee, she oversaw the installation of a new slate roof at the 40 Arch Street office and a window replacement project at the Stamford site.

Gini was also willing to lend a hand to Family Centers' fundraising efforts. In 1995, she hosted the Big Apple Pops Dinner benefit. For all her tremendous contributions to the organization, Family Centers honored Gini with the 1997 Helen Gratz Rockefeller Outstanding Volunteerism Award.

We will miss Gini’s unique sense of humor, dedication to serving others and thoughtful counsel.

At the request of her family, those wishing to memorialize Gini’s life may do so through a gift to Family Centers. Donations may be made online at www.familycenters.org or mailed to: Family Centers, 40 Arch Street, Greenwich, CT 06830
Join Family Centers for one “Enchanted Evening” filled with island adventure and romance at our South Pacific benefit on Friday, May 29, 2015.

Co-chairs Brooke Ashforth, Laurie Grauer, Laurie Host, and Susan Yonce, along with our enchanting committee, will transform the waterfront home of Laurie and Peter Grauer into a Polynesian paradise on Long Island Sound.

We’re presently seeking generous sponsors and underwriters to provide the humu that will make our premier fundraiser a tremendous success. For a list of these opportunities, visit www.familycenters.org. Space is limited, so sign up today!