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A Successful Silver Anniversary Breakfast Fundraiser In Support Of Regional Hospice And Home Care

By Nancy K. Crevier
Monday, June 16, 2014

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Photo: *Nancy K. Crevier*

RN Chris Mastropietro, perinatal and pediatric Hospice nurse, was the keynote speaker for the 2014 Newtown Chapter Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut Breakfast Fundraiser, Wednesday, June 11.



Photo: *Nancy K. Crevier*

Paul Sirois, executive director of Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut Foundation, and Cynthia Roy, president and CEO, are all smiles about the great turnout of support on Wednesday morning.

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Photo: *Nancy K. Crevier*

Suzanne White, right, pours coffee for Marsha Moskowitz, left, and Debbie Vaughan. The women were guests at a table hosted by Joanne’s Fitness Studio.

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Well over 200 people attended the 25th Annual Newtown Chapter Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut Breakfast Fundraiser, Wednesday morning, June 11, at the Waterview in Monroe. Filling 39 tables hosted by individuals, clubs, businesses, and organizations, the morning started with a time for socializing.

Hosts and hostesses of each sponsored table were on hand, garbed in aprons, to pour coffee, tea, and juice for guests, in hopes of garnering “tips” — all to support Regional Hospice. Chitchat, hugs, and a little shop talk circulated around the elegant room, prior to welcoming remarks from Marg Studley, who along with Marie Sturdevant, co-chaired the event.

The co-chairs were grateful for the table sponsors this year, including the three corporate sponsors, the Newtown Lions Club Foundation, Inc, Newtown Savings Bank, and Union Savings Bank, they said. “It is a good crowd,” commented Ms Studley.

Guests were eager to purchase raffle tickets from Newtown Chapter Hospice volunteers, in hopes of winning one of several items. From gift certificates to gift baskets, a table was laden with the raffle donations from local businesses as diverse as Taunton Wine & Liquor to Joanne Fitness Studio to Butcher’s Best Country Market, and many more.

Twenty-five years ago, a small group of women gathered to form the Newtown Chapter, to help Regional Hospice care for the terminally ill, Ms Studley told the group. It is an effort that has grown over the years to become the chapter’s largest fundraiser, drawing in the support of Newtown and surrounding communities, she said, for which they are thankful.

This year’s keynote speaker was Chris Mastropietro, an RN specializing in perinatal and pediatric hospice care.

“It is a tremendous honor to be here,” said Ms Mastropietro, “and a privilege to do the work I do.”

Ms Mastropietro shared stories of her own experiences working with terminally ill children and their families through Hospice. “This doesn’t happen to people,” sobbing parents told her at one home, as their child lay dying. But, Ms Mastropietro said, “It does.” According to World Health Organization, 50,000 children die from illnesses and disease each year.

“These children and families deserve appropriate hospice care,” she said, but less than 18 percent of the hospice programs in the country provide hospice care for children. Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut is one of the few agencies that offers the specialized hospice care terminally ill children and their families need, she said, as well as perinatal hospice care when it is determined in utero that a baby will have a limited life span. Perinatal care offers families guidance through the pregnancy, labor, birth, and remembrance, said Ms Mastropietro.

Hospice works as a team to provide medical care and quality end of life care for children and families. “We work together,” she said, “to provide continuity of care and emotional and spiritual support. “We encourage dialogue, so that families do not suffer in silence.”

The ultimate reward of her job, is to be invited into people’s lives, and witnessing the courage, strength, grace, and love, she said.

“The work Hospice does every day is incredible,” said Cynthia Roy, president and CEO of Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western

Connecticut, adding, “We all get a lot more back than we give.”

It was seven years ago that it was determined that an option was needed for families for whom end of life at home was not the best scenario, said Ms Roy. That dream is coming to fruition, with the opening of the Regional Hospice residency, scheduled for December.

The 36,000-square-foot, 12-suite residence in Danbury, designed to look and feel like a large home, will offer a peaceful alternative for terminally ill children, teens, and adults who do not want to, or are not able to, die at home. “It is an option when home is no longer an option,” Ms Roy said, welcoming not only Connecticut residents, but people from all over the country.

“We couldn’t do this without our volunteers,” Ms Roy said. “They’re amazing individuals.”

Ms Roy also singled out 14-year-old Newtown resident Ryan Patrick, founder of the KIDO program that has raised more than \$41,000 of a \$50,000 goal to build a playground at the new facility. “It’s a bunch of students coming together to make a difference,” she said.

The last speakers of the morning, as guests finished up a meal of waffles topped with sausage, bacon, and a mini omelet, and a smoothie “shooter” on the side, were State Representatives Mitch Bolinsky and Dan Carter. The representatives were on hand to present a proclamation, on behalf of the General Assembly, with “sincerest congratulations to the Newtown Chapter” for over 25 years of fundraising excellence for Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut.

“It is truly, truly, truly a first class organization,” said Ms Bolinsky.

The support given for the new hospice residence, Dan Carter told the gathering, changes the face of the state, and of hospice care.

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