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SPECIAL EDITION WINTER 2008

SPECIAL ANNUAL MEETING EDITION

CPA Celebrates 133rd Annual Meeting!

“Hope...” Theme of Pond House Breakfast Meeting

The 133rd annual meeting of Community Partners In Action, Inc., was held on Tuesday morning, December 9th at the Pond House in Elizabeth Park, Hartford. Approximately 125 friends, staff and supporters of CPA attended the event.

The keynote address was given by State Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr., President Pro Tempore of the Connecticut Senate. In her introduction of Senator Williams, Board Chair Hope Seeley, Esq., noted that he was elected to the legislature in 1993 from the “quiet corner” of Connecticut – the Windham County area.

She said that Senator Williams has a reputation for championing reforms, including, but not limited to, the appointment of a child advocate as well as one for victims of crime. She called him a “true visionary.”

In his speech, Senator Williams reviewed economic conditions in this country and in Connecticut, noting that while they seem to be pretty dismal, “in times of crises there are opportunities as well.” He suggested that the state leaders, while looking at budget cuts, need to look at Community Partners in Action and realize that a dollar invested there makes “good sense.” Because, he explained, “the human cost of failing to provide hope and a ladder out of the tragic situations returning inmates face means lost potential for us all. The challenges are great”, he concluded, “but the responsibilities are greater.”

Awards and recognition were given to four leaders in the field of criminal justice: Rep. William Dyson; Martha Stone; Lorenzo Jones; and Sister Nancy Audette.

Rep. Dyson, who has retired from the state legislature, was honored for his many years of dedication to the cause of justice and for his continuing support of CPA. In comments made after the award was presented, Rep. Dyson said that while he has retired from the legislature, he has not and will not retire from life and “go and sit in a corner.” He stressed the importance of continuing to work on behalf of those less fortunate, who do not have tools and abilities to champion their own cause.

The next recognition was of Martha Stone who is the executive director of the Center for Children’s Advocacy and has worked for many years on behalf of juveniles in the system who have no legal representation. In presenting her award, executive director Maureen Price-Boreland, Esq., said, “we honor you and appreciate the work you have done on behalf of our juvenile population.” Ms. Stone responded that it was “an honor to receive this award from CPA”, an agency she described as “listening to what we said” and working with us as a true “community partner.”

Lorenzo Jones, a former gang member, is now the executive director of A Better Way Foundation.

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Talking about his youth growing up in the Chicago projects, he said “you quickly became familiar with agencies and their protocol”, but that his experiences with CPA were “different” because the staff listened and cared. He called CPA a “model” for other agencies, particularly in how they deal with their clients, specially the juvenile ones. “What’s unique about CPA”, he concluded, is that it’s made up of “real people” who go that extra mile.

Sister Nancy Audette, founder of the Resettlement Program, was the final honoree. Deborah Rogala, program manager of the Resettlement Program, presented her award, “honoring my hero and our hero”. Sister Nancy began with the Resettlement Program in 1992 and was with it until 1997. She also held several other positions within CPA through the years. She will be retiring in June 2009 to pursue another career.

In accepting her award, Sister Nancy recounted her years with CPA, noting that all her social work training came from her work with the organization. Commenting on the variety of positions she held with CPA, she said, “but my heart really belongs to the Resettlement Program which has helped thousands of women get back on their feet and reclaim their lives.”

The meeting included the election of five new Board Members. They are: Gustavo Espinoza, Housing Development Manager, City of Hartford; J. Martin Acevedo, Esq., General Counsel, Companions and Homemakers, Inc.; Alexis L. Highsmith, Esq., Attorney, Greater Hartford Legal Aid; Woody Exley, Self-Employed provider of editorial services to major corporations; and, Amy Horowitz, Esq., Attorney, Law Offices of Horowitz, Spicer, and Tallo, LLC.

Elected Officers were: Chair, Hope Seeley, Esq.; Vice Chair, John Lobon; Secretary, April Goff Brown; and, Treasurer, K. C. Burns.

Hope Seeley, Esq. recognized outgoing board member Ramona Mercado Espinoza, Esq., thanking her for her years of service and dedication to CPA.

Staff Clayton Evans, Jeff Greene, and Richard Pizzuto were given the Ann Koletsky Award for Perfect Attendance and Cornelius Powell, client of the Prisoner Re-Entry Program, was awarded the Gordon S. Bates Scholarship.

Programs of the Year were the Hartford Alternative Incarceration Center, Technical Violation Unit, and Young Offender Programs for “embodying the spirit of cooperation and collaboration.”

