

Goodwill Presents Awards

Goodwill Industries of Western Connecticut is proud to announce the winners of its annual awards presented at a luncheon on March 31. A panel of board members chose the recipients.



Kristin Harrison is the Goodwill Graduate of the Year. When Kristin was referred to Goodwill by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, she was having difficulty finding a job due to a combination of low self-esteem and an inability to learn new tasks easily.

Motivated by a strong desire to obtain a full-time job so that she could save for her three children's education and provide medical insurance for her family, Kristin worked with a Goodwill employment specialist who helped her overcome her fears and develop ways to learn new tasks.

Her determination led to success. She obtained a job as a greeter at Wal-Mart in Danbury. At first she relied heavily on a job coach, but as she gained confidence, she found that she could learn and perform tasks without assistance. She greets incoming customers with a big smile, answers their questions and gives them pink tickets for returned items. When they leave she checks receipts and thanks them for shopping. The store is very happy with Kristin's performance. "Kristin is a fine example of all that a Wal-Mart associate should be—personable, helpful and responsible," the manager said.

The Goodwill Achiever of the Year is Cynthia D' Aiuto. For years, Cynthia suffered severe seizures caused by



encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. In 1999, she underwent surgery to control the disorder. When she was discharged a year and a half later into Goodwill's Acquired Brain Injury Program, she was still experiencing two to four seizures per day, some of them quite lengthy.

Since that time, Cindy has made incredible strides. By working with Goodwill staff members to learn stress management techniques, she was able to reduce her seizures to about one per month so that they no longer interfere with her ability to work and live a normal life. Working in a Goodwill store, she has steadily increased her hours from 15 to 30 per week. After persevering through many difficult circumstances, Cindy re-united with her two daughters and re-entered her community with a sense of confidence and self-assurance.

Wal-Mart of Danbury won the Goodwill Employer of the Year Award. In keeping with the Wal-Mart corporate philosophy that community concerns are best addressed in our local communities, the Danbury Wal-Mart store has been extremely receptive to working with people with disabilities.

The store has hired five Goodwill people and has taken time to train them and provide extra support. Jobs assigned include two cart pushers, a stock person, a sales associate and a greeter. The store manager and department managers are very open to discussing the progress of these individuals and always call for help in resolving difficult issues.

Board Member Leads Community Involvement in New Canaan

Goodwill board member Jean Cortes and local church volunteer Mary Rehnbert recently organized a Valentine's Day party for Goodwill Wahlstrom residents and others in the community. The event was held at the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan. Members of the church youth group assisted in hosting the party which featured crafts, refreshments, a song and a prayer at the end.

Jean is planning a barbecue in May and has also organized special monthly Goodwill Donation Drives held at the church on a Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Jean Cortes and her daughter, Cristina, with Goodwill residents Danny Lacourse and Herbert Hubbell

Wheelchair Donation Benefits Goodwill Resident



Evelyn Place uses her new wheelchair to get around the building with ease.

The Wheelchair Foundation, a nonprofit organization leading an international effort to deliver a wheelchair to every man, woman and child in the world who needs one, donated three wheelchairs to Goodwill Industries of Western Connecticut. Linda Turner, Senior Vice President of Vocational Services for NYC Goodwill, facilitated the donation via NYC Goodwill's distribution program.

The chairs are used by program participants like Wahlstrom resident Evelyn Place. After suffering a severe stroke in 1983, Evelyn came to Goodwill for vocational evaluation, work adjustment and independent living skills instruction. She moved into the Wahlstrom residence and began working in the workshop at Goodwill. She remains partially paralyzed and cannot speak clearly.

Her spirits, however, are high and she displays outstanding motivation and determination. She continues to work in Goodwill's Contracts Department. In December, she was delighted to share Goodwill's Christmas party with her grandchildren.

The wheelchair came just in time for Evelyn. Until recently she was able to get around using a cane. However, she fell a couple of times and now is thankful for her new wheelchair.

Contracts Department Helps with Homeland Defense

Goodwill's Industrial Contracts Department partners with local businesses and government agencies to fulfill packaging, assembly and mailing needs while providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities and special needs. Goodwill workers recently packaged 140,000 potassium iodide kits for the State of Connecticut Emergency Planning Commission to distribute to people living within a ten-mile radius of the Millstone Power Station in Waterford.

Workers separated pill packets and then inserted them along with letters and directions into an envelope for mailing. The contract kept many individuals active and productive for three months as they worked on this important task.



Yvette Rivera demonstrates the potassium iodide job performed for the State of Connecticut Emergency Planning Commission.

New Residents

Goodwill's Wahlstrom Residence has two new happy faces—Stephen Neumann and Denise McClenney. Both are enrolled in Goodwill's Acquired Brain Injury Program. They join 25 other individuals in a residence that provides housing for individuals with special needs who seek living accommodations in a supportive environment.

Denise, once a health care worker herself, came to Goodwill from Connecticut Valley Hospital after a combination of car accidents and a fall caused her to suffer an acquired brain injury. She works a few hours a week in Goodwill's Industrial Contracts Department and in the Goodwill Store as part of her pre-vocational training. Although she lost the ability to communicate verbally, she can still read and spends evenings reading books and watching television.

Stephen came to Goodwill after spending many months hospitalized to recover from injuries caused by several auto accidents. He works in the pre-vocational program as an assembler and visits the public library often as he strives to regain his reading and writing skills. His goal is to be able to some day get a job as a custodian.



Stephen Neumann



Denise McClenney