

DARIEN VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

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The 29th annual Darien Volunteer Recognition Day was a day not just to recognize **the** volunteers that make Darien tick, but to also recognize one that devoted her life to helping others in town. Saralyn Woods was **the** main event. Woods, who died two months ago, was posthumously given **the** Obie Harrington-Howes **Community** Spirit Award.

Her husband, Bob, accepted **the** award in her honor at **the** recognition day, which drew more than 100 people to **the** Darien **Community** Association. **The** annual recognition is sponsored by **the** **Community Fund** of Darien and **the** Volunteer Center of Southwestern Fairfield County.

"I know she thought **the** world of all of you and all **the** volunteers in town," Woods said, fighting back tears. "With that said, there's no recognition that would mean more to Sara than this award and I'm happy to accept it on her behalf."

In addition to Mrs. Woods, 48 others were honored for their service to Darien, including Judy Kilmartin, who was given **the** Betsy Rich Award for her volunteer work at Person-to-Person.

"It's a great award," Kilmartin told **The** Darien Times. "Betsy Rich was a great woman. It's very humbling to be honored in her name."

Kilmartin arrived in Darien in 1976 and started volunteering at **the** Junior League of Stamford/Norwalk and in **the** Darien school system. In 1982 she began volunteering at Person-to-Person. Twenty-six years later, she's still hard at work, now as **the** assistant executive director and director of volunteers.

"Judy considers every volunteer as important as **the** next," said Randi-Jean Hedin, who nominated Kilmartin. "Her 26 years at Person-to-Person are reflective of her commitment to Person-to-Person and her dedication to volunteerism in Darien."

Kilmartin said she is proud of all **the** volunteers at Person-to-Person and all over town.

"We all cross-pollinate with all **the** volunteerism that goes on in Darien," she said. "It's quite remarkable. There's such a sense of **community** in Darien, it's great."

Saralyn Woods arrived in Darien, her husband's hometown, in 1980. Over **the** years she became involved in local volunteer organizations from **the** Board of Finance to **the** Darien Historical Society to St. Luke's Church.

"Saralyn Woods was an inspiration to us all - as a friend as well as for her service to **the** **community** and for her straightforward and meticulous approach to life," said Judy Groppa, executive director of **the** historical society. "Her passing less than two months

ago is a loss for our entire **community**."

Yet Harrington-Howes said there was something different about **the** process to choose this year's award recipient.

"It was a choice beyond reproach, everybody had **the** same idea and that really speaks to Saralyn," he said. "Every agency she ever touched will tell you **the** same story, about **the** passion, **the** dedication, **the** absolute commitment that she had."

Woods thanked everyone for **the** support, which he called phenomenal, that he has received over **the** past two months.

"Saralyn would have loved to be a part of this today," he said. "She believed that if you didn't have a spirit for volunteerism, there was something wrong with you."

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