

I CHAMBER HAPPENINGS I

Community spirit rewarded by chamber

Over the past 14 months or so, the world and our region witnessed a once-in-a-generation event that tested our communities and businesses in so many ways: unprecedented health responses, business closures, large-scale unemployment, changes to work schedules, and other alterations to life as we knew it.

As always, our resilient national and regional spirit helped us navigate this unpredictable period — which is still ongoing — to build new partnerships, and to find creative ways to meet these challenges. Among the bravest and most dedicated among this group were area health care workers and other community organizations who stepped up to meet the call.

These groups and individuals went above and beyond, and to thank them, the Waterbury Regional Chamber will be recognizing several outstanding recipients during our 16th annual Health Care Council Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on Aug. 17. This year, the council, led by chair Kristie Balis-



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ciano, marketing and communications specialist at EasterSeals, will be honoring five individuals from the Waterbury area, as well as three community organizations:

Shawna Edwards, chief nursing officer; Jason Langlais, manager of clinical pharmacy; and Amanda Strileckis, director of safety, quality, and performance improvement at St. Mary's Hospital will receive this year's Leadership Award. As the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Leadership Team, these health care professionals came together and developed a vaccine clinic at the hospital and then partnered with the City of Waterbury to create a larger mass vaccination clinic to reach the wider community.

The council will present the Unsung Hero Award to two indi-

viduals: Robin Sills, a registered nurse, who is the regional physician liaison manager for Trinity Health of New England/St. Mary's Hospital; and Dr. David Hill, an intensive care and pulmonary specialist with Waterbury Pulmonary Associates. For more than 30 years, Sills has worked tirelessly to bring accessible, quality care to patients in the Greater Waterbury community and to ensure that providers have all the necessary tools to bring patients top quality care. During the pandemic, Hill was a regular attending doctor in intensive care units at both hospitals in Waterbury, working long hours to care for the sickest patients. As a member of the American Lung Association board of directors, Hill was a national spokesperson providing education about the pandemic and importance of the vaccine.

The Organizational Excellence Award will be presented to Waterbury Health and Post University. During the pandemic, these two institutions teamed up to run the second largest drive through the COVID-19 community vaccine clinic in New Haven County.

The Stephen Sasala Health Advocate Award will go to the Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury for its work in partnering with the City of Waterbury and Waterbury Health to establish a pop-up clinic at the River Baldwin Recreation Center in order to offer vaccinations to underserved Spanish-speaking residents of Waterbury.

All of these individuals and organizations deserve a round of applause for their incredible — and ongoing — efforts over the last year. We are a safer, healthier, more vibrant region because of them.

For information, including registration and sponsorship opportunities for this year's Waterbury Regional Chamber Health Care Council's 16th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony — which will feature state epidemiologist Dr. Matthew Cartter — please visit waterburychamber.com.

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