

Today is the 23rd annual Day of Caring event

By **SUSAN CORICA**
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Come rain or shine, the 23rd annual Day of Caring is going on today [FRIDAY].

The event is sponsored by the United Way of West Central Connecticut, which serves Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, and Plymouth.

“Day of Caring is chance for all individuals in our communities to give, advocate and volunteer. It’s a day to join hands, open your heart and find your voice,” according to a United Way statement.

Day of Caring began in 1992 as a way to help employees of local corporations interact with human service agencies and has grown since then. While United Way promotes community service

volunteer efforts year-round, this annual event is intended to bring hundreds of people together to make a difference in their community.

Volunteers will be working all day at the following local non-profit organizations:

The Bristol Adult Resource Center (East Main Street, Lake Avenue, Jerome Avenue, and Redstone Hill Road sites); The Bristol Boys & Girls Club at Cambridge Park; Bristol Head Start (Lake Avenue and South Street sites); The Bristol Historical Society; Bristol Preschool Child Care Center; Domus Amoris; Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut at Indian Rock; Girl Scouts of Connecticut at Camp Carlson;

The Imagine Nation Museum

& Preschool Learning Center.

Meals for the Needy; The New England Carousel Museum; PARC Inc. Plainville; Plymouth Community Food Pantry; Prudence Crandall Center; Salvation Army; Shepard Meadows Therapeutic Riding Center; St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol, Elms TLC, and Women with Children; Town of Plymouth Parks & Recreation; and Wheeler Regional Family YMCA.

This year’s volunteers include individuals from the following local companies and organizations:

Barnes Group & Associated Spring, Bauer Company, Bristol Hospital, Cigna Healthcare, ESPN, Farmington Bank, First Bristol Federal Credit Union,

GE Industrial Solutions, Kohl’s of Plainville, Liberty Bank, Pines at Bristol, Plymouth Family Resource Center, Target of Southington, Thomaston Savings Bank, and Webster Bank

Volunteers are also drawn from the following youth groups:

Bristol Sports Hall of Fame, United Way Youth Board (students from Bristol Eastern, Bristol Central, Lewis Mills, Plainville, St. Paul Catholic, and Terryville high schools).

Individual volunteers include:

Sue Bernier, Robyn Bugbee, Barbara Fontaine, Dawn Ganem, Kelly and Lori LaFrance, Kristie Oren, Kayla Southworth, and Bill Stortz.

The United Way of West Central Connecticut originated as the Community Chest of Bristol,

Conn. in 1922 and later expanded into the towns of Burlington and Plymouth.

The United Way of Bristol, Burlington and Plymouth then merged with the United Way of Plainville in 1996 to form the United Way of West Central Connecticut, which is one of 15 independent United Ways in Connecticut and one of nearly 1,300 national and worldwide agencies.

The United Way of West Central Connecticut has been in partnership with individuals, business and organizations working to improve community life for over 90 years.

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Hospital mentoring program recognized

STAFF REPORT

BRISTOL — Bristol Hospital was among several Connecticut businesses honored this week for its long-standing commitment to mentoring and was named to The Governor’s Prevention Partnership Corporate Mentoring Honor Roll, during an award ceremony held in Rocky Hill.

Mary McLaughlin, senior vice president of Comcast Western New England and co-chair of the Governor’s Prevention Partnership, welcomed colleagues, thanked them and asked for their needed support to help the thousands of Connecticut students still in need of mentors.

Bristol Hospital for the past 13 years has taken part in a local school-based mentoring program for students.

During this week’s ceremony, New Haven Mayor Toni Harp spoke about the importance of mentoring and about ways her city has initiated greater opportunities for mentoring relationships for youth who need it most there. “I believe in mentoring,” said Mayor Harp. “Every one of us has some-

thing to teach. Every one of us has something to learn. There’s no limit to the potential in these mentoring relationships.” The event, titled “A Look Ahead: Mentoring In Connecticut,” included remarks from Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer for the Connecticut State Department of Education. She shared a story about a young man named Derek Williams. “Derek thought that he

may not graduate high school and sought a mentor for himself,” said Russell-Tucker. “As a result of his mentor-mentee relationship, Derek not only went on to complete graduate school, he saw the value in ‘paying

it forward’ and became a mentor as an adult.

“I can give you 64,000 reasons to be a mentor in Connecticut,” she said. She explained that in the 2011-2012 school year, 64,000 Connecticut students were chronically absent from school, missing about 10% of valuable learning. “Access to quality consistent mentoring makes a difference,” continued Russell-Tucker. “It is proven to lower two key failure points – attendance and behavioral problems.”

“Every one of us has something to teach. Every one of us has something to learn.”



Bristol Hospital official Cindy Soucy, far right, took part in this week’s award ceremony recognizing the hospital’s long-running mentoring program.

Inspirational speaker and author of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to The Soul*, Robert Clancy, served as Keynote Speaker. Clancy, an avid volunteer for much of his life, talked about the value of incorporating volunteerism into everyday life, “Incorporate mentoring into an interest that you already have,” said Clancy. “It’s easier than you think.”

Ranging from Fortune 500 corporations to small companies, honor roll companies mentor students in

more than 100 communities. They earned the recognition as business leaders in mentoring by providing employees release time from work to volunteer as mentors, who often include top managers. Many of the companies have formed mentoring alliances with a local school, or school district.

Research has shown that programs that rely on volunteer mentors can play a powerful role in reducing drug abuse and youth violence while greatly enhancing a

young person’s prospects for leading a healthy and productive life.

Now in its 25th year, The Governor’s Prevention Partnership is a statewide nonprofit public-private alliance, building a strong, healthy future workforce through leadership in mentoring and prevention of youth violence and bullying, underage drinking, and substance abuse. The Partnership is the only statewide organization focusing exclusively on prevention issues affecting youth.