



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF THE LOWER NAUGATUCK VALLEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley to honor
Silvia Rodriguez, Karen Bentlage with Raymond P. Lavietes Service to Youth
Award;
Also presenting Champion of Youth and From the Heart awards**

Shelton, CT, March 19, 2019 – The Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley will be presenting Silvia Rodriguez, Director of the Shelton Youth Services Bureau, and Karen Bentlage, business entrepreneur, with its Raymond P. Lavietes Service to Youth award, on April 9.

The award is the highest honor the Club can present to an individual, named after beloved Club friend and supporter, Ray Lavietes, who helped make our Boys & Girls Club a frontrunner in the provision of services to youth through his dedication and commitment. This award honors an individual or individuals worthy of recognition due to their involvement in serving the youth of our community.

Rodriguez served as the Shelton Youth Services Bureau's Youth 2 Youth peer advocate advisor for 20 years, training youth in communication skills, problem solving, and how to be effective role models. In 2017 she was promoted to Director. For more than 15 years, she worked closely with our Boys & Girls Club as Smart Moves Coordinator. She provided programming, mentorship, and life-changing experiences through field trips and camping trips to members at our Raymond P. Lavietes Clubhouse in Shelton and our Joel E. Smilow Clubhouse in Ansonia. When Rodriguez was chosen as Director for Shelton Youth Services Bureau, she had to give up running the program but maintains close ties, most recently matching her Youth 2 Youth members with our kindergarten-second grade members in a "Little Brothers, Little Sisters" mentoring program.

"My passion continues to be helping youth reach their fullest potential by giving them opportunities to grow within themselves and be confident with all they have to offer," Silvia says. "Having the opportunity to touch the lives of the children in my community has been such an honor and a blessing."

Bentlage has been involved with the Boys & Girls Club, first as a Corporator, then as a Director, since 2011. A life-long Shelton resident until 2019, Karen adopted our Club as a charity she is truly passionate about. When she took on the role of Back-a-Kid campaign chair, her skills and talents were truly brought to light. Under Karen's leadership the campaign received a tremendous outpouring of support and the revenue for the annual campaign more than doubled. A business owner since the early '80s, she is currently Regional Developer for the European Wax Centers.



“Keeping kids off the streets and in an environment that promotes and encourages success is an investment well worth making,” Karen says. “I am proud to be involved with this great organization and to support these wonderful programs.”

“It’s an honor to recognize some of the most influential leaders from our community,” says Shaye Roscoe, Executive Director. “These two ladies have been instrumental to the success of our Club and have had such a positive impact on the lives of our kids.”

Also being honored at the Service to Youth dinner on April 9 will be Chaz and AJ in the Morning/WPLR and Robert Lesko & the DiMatteo Family Charitable Foundation. Both will receive our Champion of Youth Award, the highest honor we can bestow on an organization.

Chaz & AJ in the Morning has been called Connecticut’s most popular morning radio show, debuting in 2003 and maintaining its number one position ever since. The pair are known for their wit, open dialogue, unwavering support for many local community organizations, and their service to listeners. Most recently, their annual toy drive, held at Jordan’s Furniture, raised \$192,000 in cash and toys for five deserving local charities. Chaz is a former Club kid who has kept his connection with our Boys & Girls Club over the years, where he attended as a child. His first radio job was at WLNV in Derby, where he learned basic radio skills through a summer internship.

The DiMatteo Family Charitable Foundation raises funds primarily through its annual golf tournament for organizations who are dedicated to research, education, and hopefully finding a cure for diseases that have touched the lives of their families, friends, clients, and staff, as well as the needs of those in the community. Since the tournament’s inception, they have raised more than \$300,000 for various well-known local and national charities such as Homes for the Brave Female Soldiers/Forgotten Heroes, Spooner House, St. Vincent’s Swim Across the sound, the American Heart Association, Valley Community Foundation, and Make-a-Wish Foundation, as well as our Boys & Girls Club.

Automated Services, Patrick Knott, and the Valley Parish Nurse Program will be honored with the From the Heart Award.

Tickets are still available for the dinner, which will be held from 5-8 pm on April 9 at the Stone Barn at Whitney Farms Golf Course in Monroe. Contact Ann Wheeler at (203) 924-7462, AnnWheeler@BGC-LNV.org before March 31.

For more information about the Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley visit us at www.BGC-LNV.org

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