

2023 Bridge-Builder Chairman's Award



Gabrielle Barnes

Gabrielle Barnes is a Windsor native who, over the last 15 years, has worked in public, academic, and special libraries—on the front lines and in management.

Most recently, Gabbie was the YOUMedia Manager at the Hartford Public Library. About seven years ago, Gabbie started doing formal social justice work—facilitating, consulting on projects, and organizing in her community.

In 2016, she received a Trauma-Informed Care certification with The Village for Families and Children, and in 2017 a formal Train-the-Trainer certification with National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ).

Gabbie's goal is to make libraries more empathetic spaces for teenagers, specifically Black and brown youth.

Gabbie has a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Washington and has received several awards for her innovative work with teens.

2023 Bridge-Builder Chairman's Award



Makhi Ettienne-Modeste

Makhi Ettienne-Modeste was a fifth-grader at John F. Kennedy School when he was selected as the 2022 Connecticut Kid Governor.

Makhi was elected on his Protecting Our Pets platform, which focuses on three points:

1. Educate Connecticut fifth graders about the signs of animal abuse and showing kindness towards companion animals.
2. Create posters that raise awareness of showing kindness towards companion animals.
3. Donate to local animal organizations to help animals that have been abused.

Makhi participates in many sports including basketball, football, and soccer. He also enjoys playing with his dogs (Blue and Paco), playing checkers, reading, and spending time with his family and friends.

Makhi's leadership qualities include being empathetic, outgoing, patient, and most importantly loving.

2023 Bridge-Builder Chairman's Award



Steve & Sue Porcaro

As the owner of 1-4-All Coaching since 2005, Steve is passionate about helping individuals and organizations achieve their goals through effective sales, leadership, and business development strategies.

Because we live in a world where it is harder to be heard, Steve founded SalesPlus MVP Academy to provide the education, tools, and tactics to cut through the noise. His mission is to empower growth, by not only imparting strategies and techniques to improve but also by giving continued support to business owners, solopreneurs, and teams who are dedicated to helping organizations level up.

Steve is a graduate of Coach University and Mohegan Community College. His previous experiences include serving as a surgical technologist in the U.S. Navy, an independent sales consultant and trainer for major medical device companies, a Certified Master OASIS Trainer, and a DISC Behaviors Facilitator.

Steve is active in the community and serves on various boards and committees, including the Boy Scouts of America, Connecticut Rivers Council, the Windsor Chamber of Commerce, Windsor Emergency Management, and is a past president of the Connecticut chapter of the International Coach Federation. A Massachusetts native, Steve moved to Connecticut while serving in the US Navy in 1983.

Sue Porcaro is the Office Manager at the Windsor Historical Society. Her voice is the one you hear when you call the Historical Society, she coordinates the reception desk volunteers, and she creates all of the society's marketing materials and graphics. Genealogy has been Sue's passion for many years.

Sue also has been drawing since she was about 5; she often got into trouble for drawing inside book covers! She moved to portraiture at age 16 and branched into fashion by 18.

Sue has been an advertising layout artist, an art director for two major department stores, and a full-time illustrator for a publishing company. She has illustrated books, magazines, web sites, religious candles, posters, and clothing. Her fine art is done entirely in colored pencil and is available for purchase as originals and prints.

Steve and Sue raised three boys and three dogs in Windsor.

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Jason Santos

Jason Santos shares his love for the holiday season by showcasing his front lawn with over 60 inflatable holiday characters and music, while collecting food for the Windsor Food & Fuel Bank.

His outdoor wonderland is a popular Windsor display.

There is no admission fee and, instead, Santos places a large food collection box near the candy cane walkway and encourages visitors to bring a nonperishable canned or boxed food item to donate to the Windsor Food & Fuel Bank.

Jason said, "I am very fortunate to be able to share these holiday decorations with others, and it feels like the right thing to do to give back and support our neighbors who need a little extra help during the holidays."

The Windsor Food & Fuel Bank and the Windsor community greatly appreciate Jason's creativity and generosity.

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Jenny Hawran, Executive Director

Jenny's road to WIN-TV began at WTNH Channel 8 in New Haven where she wrote, produced, and directed local commercials and promotional programming. She moved to WDRC AM/FM radio as Commercial Continuity Director before opening her own web design business in 2001. Jenny is a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University with a degree in journalism and studied web design at Manchester Community College. Jenny is a hometown Windsor girl, who married a hometown Windsor guy, Fred, who together have raised hometown Windsor daughters, Sara, Katie, and Michelle.

Howard Marsh, Production Supervisor/KIDVID Coordinator

Howard is a gifted video producer and filmmaker who brings to his work as KIDVID Coordinator a sense of fun as well as a responsibility to teach great storytelling through the medium of television. He is a role model to our young people, an example of someone who is always learning and sharing his passion for television and film.

Jamil Ahmed, Editor and Videographer

Jamil has been a freelance videographer for over five years and is more recently producing online content for businesses across the New England area. Filmmaking is a passion for Jamil because he was involved in creative arts from writing to music since an early age. Jamil is excited to bring his creative energy to WIN-TV and share his love for filming and editing to the community.



Phyllis Stargardter, Administrative Assistant

Phyllis is not only WIN-TV's Administrative Assistant, but she does double duty at the Windsor Chamber of Commerce in the same role. Phyllis keeps WIN-TV organized and on task and also brings a creative background as an artist. Come by, see her smiling face, and say hello.

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Leticia Colón de Mejias

Leticia Colón de Mejias is the recipient of multiple national honors related to her work in energy, equity, building retrofits in vulnerable communities, environmental justice, and writing. She is a board member for numerous local and national organizations including the Connecticut Governor’s Council on Climate Change and the United States NEJAC board, which advises the federal EPA in environmental justice policy. She is the National Building Performance Policy co-chair and the Connecticut CWCSEO chair of Latino Affairs.

Leticia is a visionary who leads with tenacity and passion. Her work has been highlighted by the US Congress, the US Department of Energy, the US Department of Education, *Time* magazine, TEDx, WNPR, the *Hartford Courant*, *Hartford Business Journal*, the National Small Business Association, the National Building Performance Association, and many others.

After a successful 16-year corporate career in healthcare, medical research, workforce development, and community relations at Hartford Healthcare, Leticia opened her own energy efficiency company in 2010. As the founder of Energy Efficiencies Solutions, Leticia leads one of the largest Latina- and woman-owned energy demand reduction companies in the country. Her efforts have helped Windsor residents utilize building retrofits to protect the environment, improve health, conserve energy, and reduce utility costs.

Leticia focuses on teaching the “Warrior Way,” which teaches how we can take action-based approaches to solving human disparities and lowering environmental burdens.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Charles Copeland

Charles Copeland is an involved supporter of youth for the past three and a half decades.

From 1999 to 2023, Charlie has taught Bible study to hundreds of children at First Church in Windsor. For many years he was a dedicated Boy Scout leader for Troop 203 and a Girl Scout leader from 2000 to 2019.

Charlie's commitment to youth leadership stems from his ability to connect Windsor youth to their passion. Through mentorship and self-discovery Charlie transforms their passions into applicable skills for career readiness. He continues to support youth in his current role as afterschool program coordinator at CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering. Here he provides activities for youths and young adults that add to their school experience, including programs with special guests, racial- and social-justice youth-led conversations, and more.

His dedication over the years has inspired many young ones to make a positive impact on the community. He has motivated many to become community leaders, teachers, and mentors. Charlie's impact on Windsor's youth is immeasurable and deserving of recognition.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



The Connecticut Radio Information System (CRIS) is Connecticut's only radio-reading service—a non-profit that has been providing audio access for individuals who are blind or print-challenged for nearly four decades.

CRIS broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from regional satellite studios in Danbury, Norwalk, Norwich, Trumbull, West Haven, and their broadcast center in Windsor.

CRIS features articles published in more than 70 newspapers and magazines, including award-winning children's magazines available online and on-demand. Programs powered by CRIS Radio include CRIS Radio, CRIS Streaming (hospitals and other health care facilities, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities), CRIS on Demand, CRISKids, CRISAccess (museums), and CRIS En Español. Currently, 86 schools are accessing CRISKids Audio Library, in which they offer custom recording for teachers to meet the specific needs of their students.

CRIS programs keep people informed about the world, the nation, Connecticut, and their local communities, and has proven to be a vital resource for individuals unable to access printed material. CRISKids offers educators a low-cost tool to help improve student literacy, reading comprehension, and reading ability.

CRIS employs a staff of four full-time and three part-time people. They rely on nearly 300 volunteers statewide to help with the production, programming, voice talent, and day-to-day operations.



2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Gary Dowgewicz

Gary Dowgewicz is behind the sound and lighting for many community events over the last couple decades.

From concerts on the Town Green, 9-11 memorials, Nightmare on Broad Street, Juneteenth, and Town Council meetings to the Northwest Park Coffee House Concert Series, Gary has been instrumental.

Our sense of community has been enhanced by Gary's efforts to make these meetings and events special.



2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Ronald Eleveld

Ronald Eleveld is a first-generation American and a product of Windsor. Ronald grew up in town and devotes countless hours to supporting our town.

He has been elected multiple times to both the Windsor Town Council and Windsor Board of Education and is an officer of the Rotary Club and member of the Masonic Lodge.

The list of activities he is involved with is long, but one of note is his yearly support of the blood drive at the Masonic Lodge. Everyone agrees he does his best for all individuals.

Ronald uses his passion, energy, and knowledge of budgeting to ensure that Windsor residents have the most services for their dollar and that Windsor remains an affordable community.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Carol Engelmann

Carol Engelmann is well known to Windsor residents for her volunteer work throughout our community. She is a project volunteer at First Town Downtown and consistently participates in events that bring the people of our community together.

As coordinator of the yearly Windsor Farmers Market, Carol furthers communication and understanding between racial and ethnic groups by ensuring vendors and local products reflect the diversity of our community. She has created a gathering place where all are welcome to socialize, be entertained, shop, and sample a variety of foods from many cultures. Carol's commitment to inclusivity has created a unique opportunity for minority and woman-owned businesses to be introduced to the community and grow. The market supports a diverse group of local farmers and provides a valuable learning experience for children to learn about agriculture.

Carol also organizes Windsor Housing Authority events. After hearing from needy seniors and individuals with disabilities, Carol created a monthly "market" stocked completely with donations. Each month she gathers donated food, toiletries, and household products and sets up a shop at three Housing Authority locations in Windsor.

Carol also spends many hours as a volunteer for Project Santa, cooks for organizations such as the Windsor Lion's Club and helps veterans in need to furnish their first apartment after homelessness.

We are amazed by her stamina and tireless work to further cross-cultural understanding.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Priscilla Ford

Priscilla Ford is an involved community member. Over the past 30 years she has been dedicated to the youth at the First Church in Windsor.

She has coordinated youth faith formation trips, discussions about contemporary topics, summer programming, and more.

Priscilla's kind spirit and care has impacted many young adults to be confident versions of themselves. She has also assisted in putting together youth service activities with local homeless shelters.

Priscilla's patience and willingness to listen to others has helped many in Windsor discover what it means to be a person of faith through their actions.

We are grateful for the everlasting positive impact Priscilla has had on our lives.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Aleks Gould

Aleks is a high school student at the Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Windsor. She is a strong leader who naturally advocates for and includes others, which is evident in everything she does. When she was captain of her soccer team, she cooperatively led the team; she would take into account the wishes of everyone and make decisions that met the needs of everyone. She was very vocal about including every player, which was not always popular, but she did it anyways.

Aleks was one of the first players selected as “Player of the Week” and was one of only two who received the year-end “Pride” award, given to players who exemplified the school’s values of Expect Excellence, Act with Courage, Demand Equity, and Embrace Collaboration.

In the classroom, Aleks is outstanding scholastically and she is equally understanding and inclusive with classmates. In addition to racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious understanding, she vigorously supports the LGBTQ and other minority communities. Her effectiveness in communicating supports a collaborative and cooperative environment.

Outside of the classroom, Aleks volunteers extensively for the Windsor Food and Fuel Bank. She led the soccer team’s community service project, which was a food drive. She also brought friends and family when her school hosted the Windsor Rotary’s Food Project—both of these efforts benefitted Windsor Food & Fuel.

Her extra-curricular activities include the Robotics Team, the Debate Team, and Drama Club.

*2023 Bridge-Builder
Legacy Award*



Helen Jones

1946 - 2022

Helen Jones was a 2022 Bridge-Builder honoree.

She was a Windsor resident for many decades and was dedicated to serving others in her community by sharing Windsor's history.

Previously Helen was an active member at the Wilson Congregational Church and participated in numerous events. Later she attended the First Church in Windsor and was a dynamic asset, involved in spiritually supporting many members.

Helen helped many youths and young adults in town with her positive attitude, kind spirit, and earnest listening.

Helen's enthusiasm and positivity helped many in Windsor feel accepted and loved. She had countless meaningful conversations about race, history, and current events that encouraged Windsor residents to look at matters from a new perspective.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Mary's Place, A Center for Grieving Children and Families, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide an atmosphere of trust where families who are grieving a death can share their experiences, receive support, and find comfort. Mary's Place provides a safe environment which encourages and supports children as they grieve in ways uniquely appropriate to their developmental stage. Through the use of tools such as art, music, and movement, children can express themselves without feeling different or alone and connect with peers who have also experienced a death.

Mary's Place grew out of the vision and generosity of Carmon Community Funeral Homes and the insight of Mary Keane. Before founding Mary's Place, Mary was an oncology nurse-clinician. In the course of her work she recognized the need for a support system for young people who had suffered the death of a loved one. This led her to organize a young widow and widowers support group in 1989. In 1991 she started a children's support group, which met in her apartment. As the number of children grew, the group moved to the student lounge at Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor Connecticut. In 1996, with the help and support of the Carmon family, Mary's Place was formally established as a Center for Grieving Children and Families and is located at 6 Poquonock Avenue in Windsor.

Mary passed away on September 22, 2021. The center is very grateful for the beautiful person Mary was and for the legacy she left for them to carry on.

Today, Mary's Place has several different peer support groups for children and families. All groups meet twice a month throughout the year.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Amani Rogers

Amani Rogers is a high school teacher at the Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Windsor. She teaches math to a diverse student population. In her classroom, all students have the opportunity to learn and not just understand math, but understand each other. Amani shows students daily that we are more alike than different.

Amani is the Robotics Club advisor. In this role, which is beyond her teaching responsibilities, she leads a group of about 30 students who collectively build, program, test, and operate robots in casual and competitive environments. If you have ever worked with teenagers, you know to get 40 of them to work together on anything is quite an accomplishment. Amani does this by insisting on mutual respect, kindness, and considerate treatment.

At the beginning of the school year, Amani joined the Equity Leadership team and has emerged as the leader of this group. This position is also beyond her teaching responsibilities. Additionally, she designed the school's Racial Justice Awareness Week curriculum and was a major contributor to the school's Racial Justice Awareness celebration.

Amani consistently expects excellence, acts with courage, demands equity, and embraces collaboration.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



Marian Sorbo

1930 - 2022

Marian Klaje Sorbo was a 2019 Bridge-Builder honoree.

She was a life-long resident of Connecticut. She was born and grew up in New Britain with her three siblings and graduated from New Britain High School. Upon graduation she took a job with the New Britain Public School system and worked there for four years. After marrying Paul Sorbo, they lived a short time in Litchfield, Connecticut, where she worked as a secretary at Litchfield High School. They moved to Windsor when Paul was appointed business manager of the Windsor Public School system. He later served as Superintendent of Schools for 19 years. Marian and Paul raised their four children, all who attended the Windsor Public Schools, and established deep roots in town while developing countless dear friends and rewarding relationships.

Marian was a Girl Scout for 50+ years, a member of the St. Joseph Church prayer shawl ministry and was a steadfast supporter of the Windsor Library Association, Northwest Park, and the Windsor High School Art Department. Both Marian and Paul were dedicated to the equitable treatment of all people and involved with “Citizens for a United Windsor” and “Ebony and Ivory Keys,” predecessors to Bridge-Builder. She was a Paul Harris Fellow of the Rotary Club of Windsor/Windsor Locks, where she actively maintained many worldwide relationships that she and Paul began during his tenure as a District Governor. Rotary International encourages its members to “Look beyond yourself” and Marian endeavored to meet that challenge every day.

To have met Marian is to have witnessed her genuine concern for others and experienced her heartfelt kindness to all.

2023 Bridge-Builder Award



LaTosha Woodard

LaTosha Woodard is a dedicated teacher and mother of three. She was previously a volleyball coach at Windsor High School and a big supporter of Windsor athletics.

LaTosha's commitment to youth has aided many young ones learn about health and self-care.

LaTosha is also a yoga instructor and has helped community members dive deeper into their faith formation. She actively volunteers at the Christ Centered Church with their outreach program.

LaTosha's positive energy, enthusiasm, and coaching have impacted many lives. Noted as one of the most profoundly impactful teachers, LaTosha molds the life of many youths.

LaTosha is also part of the Zeta Phi Beta sorority where she volunteers and improves the life of many in Windsor.

The community is grateful to have LaTosha as a leader, teacher, and friend.