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Kiwanis Club hosts 25th Craft Fair

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By Kendra Wingate

The Kiwanis Club of Fairfield celebrated its 25th annual fundraising Craft Fair on the Town Hall Green, as proceeds aimed at improving the lives of our community's youth. Kiwanis, a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time, was chartered in Fairfield in 1961.

Members volunteer service projects focus on the needs of children which include pediatric trauma, safety, child care, early development, infant health, nutrition and parenting skills. Such projects also support additional local needs within the community's with which they serve and include working to end substance abuse, helping the elderly, promoting literacy, and supporting youth sports and recreation.

"This is the 25th anniversary of our Craft Fair," said Tom Maniscalco, president. "All the monies we raise go back to the Town of Fairfield in the form of scholarships and more. We have done a lot of support with Wakemans Boys & Girls Club this year, we contributed \$10,000 to help them buy a van, we also donated another \$5,500 to them, gave out \$10,000 in scholarships to high school students – we've done a lot this year. We raise all the money ourselves by doing things such as this craft fair, we sell Poinsettia plants at Christmas time, we also sponsored a golf tournament this year – all those things combined is where the money comes from. We put it right back into the community. We are happy and we're proud!"

"We have a dedicated group of men and women who work to promote young children one child and one community at a time," said Vice President Tove Vanderblue. "The money we make goes to scholarships for children going into college, we try to help those who are less fortunate and really need a little bit of help. We are also supporting 'Caring with Grace' (created in June 2014) this year which supports children with pediatric cancer, and we help support Project From the Heart each year."

"Caring with Grace was started by a little girl named Grace Targonski (Stamford resident) who started this three ago when she was 10 years old because her Aunt had cancer," said Andrea Martino, Trumbull resident. "She researched it and found out that less than 5 percent of all government funds in total goes to pediatric cancer. She wanted to raise awareness so she started hat drives and a lemonade stand. Today, children are here making cards that will go directly to children in the hospitals with cancer to bring a smile to their faces and to let them know people are thinking of them and that they are supported."

Craft Fair Co-chair Rich Parker said, "I joined Kiwanis because I wanted to be involved with the local community and to support kids. The children are the most important, it's important to me to keep our youth moving forward." Co-Chair Beverly Reidy added, "My daughters joined the Key Club at Fairfield Ludlowe High School and Kiwanis sponsors the Key Club so I had been wanting to join Kiwanis for years – they now have an evening meeting so people that work can attend. I was born in Fairfield, we live in Fairfield, we go to church here and hope to stay here – this is where I want to give back. I want to give back to Fairfield and that's what Kiwanis does primarily for the youth. We gave \$10,000 to Wakemans in Fairfield, gave a scholarship to one student from Ludlowe, Warde, Prep and Notre Dame - \$2,500 each –

we do each year. We do volunteer work to raise money to give back to Fairfield.”

Annual vendor and Fairfield resident Pam Deluca explained, “I come to support the Kiwanis and the community. I started making jewelry and the prisms were the items people liked the most; they were more heartfelt and more healing pieces. It’s a great all-purpose gift; I make custom colored pieces for every occasion and for every room in your house.”

Ninety-four year old Kiwanis member Sal Maniscalco said, “We have had some really good times here. A friend of mine talked me into joining 49 years ago and it has been a very enjoyable experience.” Sal’s wife Helen concurred, “It’s a wonderful fair, very friendly, cooperative people.” The Maniscalco family had three generations in attendance supporting Kiwanis including grandson James.

Membership is open to local civic minded people who would like to make a positive impact on the children within our community. For more information, contact President Tom Maniscalco at 203.257.6167 .

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