



Fairfield County
Community Foundation

Media Contact: Jeff Yates
Communication Manager
Direct: 203.750.3212
Email: jyates@fccfoundation.org

Bridgeport educators recognized for teaching excellence

Bassick High School and Beardsley School teachers receive the Theodore and Margaret Beard Excellence in Teaching Award

NORWALK -- April 25, 2011 – On Tuesday, May 3, the Bridgeport Public Education Foundation and the Fairfield County Community Foundation will honor 13 individuals who have made a difference in education in Bridgeport.

The 2011 Inspiration Awards recognize teachers, administrators and community leaders who have dedicated their time and passion to helping Bridgeport students succeed.

Highlighting the awards ceremony are the Theodore and Margaret Beard Excellence in Teaching Awards, two \$25,000 awards presented to teachers who have brought innovation, excitement and a love of learning to the classroom. The Beard Awards, among the largest education awards in the country, are provided each year through a fund at the Fairfield County Community Foundation.

This year's Beard Award winners are: Kathryn Silver, a visual arts teacher at Bassick High School and Dawn Schirizzo, a sixth grade teacher at Beardsely School.

Ms. Silver has been a teacher in Bridgeport for 20 years and in her five years at Bassick has expanded the scope of the visual arts department to include producing a television show, producing the annual yearbook and all sports related calendars. This year, Ms. silver's students produced a video "Pride of the lions" that won Best Sports Documentary at the New York Independent/International Film Festival.

Ms. Schirizzo has been a teacher in Bridgeport for eight years and uses student data to drive the development of her lessons and build programs that meet the individual needs of each of her students. In addition, she has worked to build strong relationships with her students' parents, meeting them at the door at dismissal time, calling, emailing and texting them with updates on their child's progress and ensuring that each student who leaves her classroom is fully prepared to succeed in seventh grade.

In addition to the Beard Awards, Tuesday's Inspiration Award ceremony recognizes nine Bridgeport educators with the Bridgeport Public Education Foundation's Outstanding Teacher Awards. This year's Outstanding Teachers are: Donna Graham at Thomas Hooker School; Steve James at Bassick High School; Arthene Lauzon at James Curiale School; America Ortiz at Luis Munoz Marin School; Laurie Polizzo at High Horizons Magnet School; Susan Reher at Multicultural Magnet School; Nitza Rua at Multicultural Magnet School; Jennifer Russell at John Winthrop School; and Dawn Spagnuolo-Curtis at Multicultural Magnet School.

Recognizing that teachers aren't the only ones making a difference in education in Bridgeport, the education foundation also honors community and school leaders who work to improve Bridgeport's schools.

The George Bellinger Leadership Award was established in 2004 and is presented annually to a Bridgeport principal. This year's recipient, Amy Marshall, has been principal of Beardsley School since 2003 and has brought new vision and stability to a school that had consistently poor student achievement. In 2008, Beardsley was recognized by the Bridgeport Child Advocacy /coalition for making significant academic gains, and in 2010 ConnCAN recognized Beardsley as one of 10 Connecticut middle school success stories.

The Elizabeth M. Pfriem Civic Award recognizes community leaders who have made a long-term commitment to child advocacy and public education. This year's recipient, Susan Ross, President & CEO of the Fairfield County Community Foundation, has built the community foundation over the past 15 years to \$140 million in assets with annual grants in excess of \$11.5 million. Under Ms. Ross' leadership, the community foundation has become a leading funder of educational initiatives in Fairfield County and a dedicated supporter and partner to the Bridgeport Public Education Foundation.

#####