



State Rep. Larry Cafero, R-142, Betsy Bain, Stew Leonard Jr., state Sen. Bob Duff, D-25, Beth Leonard and Jill Leonard Tavello pose for a photograph following Tuesday's Volunteer Action Center's annual Leadership Breakfast held at Dolce Norwalk Center. *Hour photo/ERIK TRAUTMANN*

## VAC honors Bain, Stew's

**NORWALK**  
By CHASE WRIGHT  
Hour Staff Writer

To kick off National Volunteer Week, the Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield honored two lifetime leaders in Norwalk community service on Tuesday.

Stew Leonard's received the Corporate Leadership Award and Norwalk native Betsy Bain — a champion of early childhood education — accepted the Distinguished Service Award during the 18th annual Volunteer Leadership Breakfast at the Dolce Center.

"Our community is only as strong as those who give back, and as we can see year after year, we have many businesses and people who give back every single day," said state Sen. Bob Duff, D-25.

Duff stood with state Rep. Larry Cafero, R-142, in reading a proclamation from Gov. M. Jodi Reil declaring April 20, 2010, "Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield Day" in Connecticut.

The legislators praised the efforts of Bain and Stew Leonard's as they were recognized for their long-standing support and volunteer involvement in the community.

"I don't think there's a (charitable) event where we haven't seen some sign, or some product or some gift that wasn't donated by Stew Leonard's," said Cafero. "If there was ever a deserving corporate award it's to Stew Leonard's."

Cafero said of Bain, "In all my life, I have never met someone who gives so much of herself to her community. She's a person without guile or ego. She just does what she thinks is right."

Stew Leonard Jr., president and CEO of the Norwalk-based grocer, accepted the award

on behalf of the company.

"We just hope we can help the next young generation add to the city of Norwalk and make it better and better," he said. "It's been so great to us."

Bain, a seventh-generation Norwalker, humbly accepted the recognition before thanking her husband of 43 years — who she said has always encouraged her efforts — as well as the many other volunteers that contribute to the community.

"She's driven to help the community; she just loves Norwalk," said her husband, Bud Bain.

A former member of the Norwalk Common Council and the Norwalk Board of Education, Betsy Bain is the current chairwoman of the Norwalk Early Childhood Council. The council focuses on preparing young Norwalkers as they enter school.

A program of the Human Services Council, the Voluntary Action Center (VAC) is mid-Fairfield County's source for volunteer recruitment, management and training services to more than 150 area non-profit agencies.

U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, D-4, Mayor Richard A. Moccia and state Sen. Toni Boucher, R-26, were also in attendance Tuesday morning.

Himes presented the honorees with a congressional declaration and spoke to the importance of volunteerism in an ailing economy.

"We have very, very substantial fiscal challenges at every level of government," said Himes. "We will, whether we like it or not, over the coming years expect less of our government, and that is why the inspiration that Stew Leonard's and Betsy Bain set for all of us is so important."