

Center for Children's Advocacy announces awards

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The Center for Children's Advocacy, a nonprofit that protects the legal rights of abused and neglected children throughout the state, announced the winners of their 2012 Fairfield County Champion of Children awards. Award winners are Sheila Perrin, president and co-founder of the Perrin Family Foundation in Ridgefield; and Joseph L. Gaudett, Jr., Bridgeport chief of police.

The Center's Champion of Children awards recognize ongoing outstanding effort in support of children and youth who suffer without the basics of a stable and healthy life: They lack stable homes, access to healthcare, necessary educational support, families of their own.

The Perrin Family Foundation has supported the Center for Children's Advocacy's work with youth in poor communities since 2007. With Perrin's support, the center is able to change the lives of youth who need help, giving them the confidence to engage in problem solving and decision making to manage their lives.

"My own children have the benefit of the resources necessary to grow into healthy, self-fulfilled adults. I have always kept the vision in my mind of children and youth not so fortunate, and continue to be saddened by the great inequities among a certain population of our youth," Sheila Perrin said. "As co-founder of the Perrin Family Foundation, I want to see all young people mentally and physically healthy, and well prepared to live a self-satisfying and productive life."

Chief Joseph Gaudett has been with the Bridgeport Police Department since 1983, and was appointed chief of police in 2010. Dedicated to helping Bridgeport youth overcome the disadvantages of their environment, he supports programs that provide opportunities to enable city youth to look forward to a secure and productive future.

Gaudett is working with the Center for Children's Advocacy to reduce race discrimination issues prevalent between police and youth in Connecticut's poorest cities.

"Our goal must be to help Bridgeport youth overcome the disadvantages that surround them, with a focus on education and graduation and an eye to a self-sufficient future," he said. His leadership is a critical component of the success of efforts to help teens stay in school and avoid involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The Center's Champion of Children Awards will be presented at the "Sunshine in February" event Feb. 29 at Trump Parc, One Broad Street, Stamford, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

"The support we provide to children and youth is critical," Martha Stone, executive director of the Center for Children's Advocacy, said, "We serve the poorest of the poor, and their problems are often overwhelming. With our community partners, we're able to reach children who have suffered from abuse, from neglect, from lack of support and without a safe place to live. We give children hope, and they deserve the right to live safe and healthy lives."

Catering for the event is provided by Stamford's Fairway Market, and Trump Parc is made available by Thomas L. Rich and Louis R. Cappelli.

The Center for Children's Advocacy was established in 1997 to protect the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children -- those falling through the cracks of the child welfare, education, juvenile justice, health and mental health systems.

To purchase tickets, visit www.kidscounsel.org or email bberk@kidscounsel.org. For more information, call 860-570-5327.