Hamden Regional Chamber Announces 2026 Chamber Choice Award Honorees

The Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the recipients of its 29th Annual Chamber Choice Awards, recognizing outstanding businesses, organizations and individuals whose leadership, dedication and contributions continue to make a lasting impact on the community. The celebration will take place on Thursday, November 12, at Cascade Fine Catering, 480 Sherman Avenue, Hamden.

For nearly three decades, the Chamber Choice Awards have celebrated the people and businesses who go above and beyond to strengthen the local economy, support their neighbors and contribute to the vitality of the region.

This year's recipients represent a diverse group of business owners, educators, community advocates and leaders whose dedication reflects the spirit of collaboration and community that the Chamber strives to foster.

The 2026 Chamber Choice Award Honorees are:

- Alltown Fresh – Business of the Year
- Ixtapa Mexican Restaurant & Cantina – Small Business of the Year
- State Senator Martin Looney– Notable Citizen of the Year
- Alicia Dawson – Chamber Leadership Award
- David Schaefer – Community Advocate
- Bethany Zemba, Quinnipiac University – Community Leadership Award
- Linens of Love – Non Profit of the Year
- Whitney Center & Nimaz Fine Art – Community Collaboration Award
- Jameka Jefferies, Diamond Realty Partners – Minority-Owned Business of the Year
- Erin Bailey, Hamden Public Schools – Educator of the Year
- Mary Pursell, Abbate Insurance Associates – Women-Owned Business of the Year
- Joe DeRisi, Town of Hamden– Sustainability & Environmental Leadership Award

The evening will begin with a cocktail reception at 6pm, followed by dinner and the awards presentation at 7pm. The event brings together business professionals, community leaders, family members and friends for an evening of recognition and celebration.

Tickets are $100 per person and include the reception and dinner.

Reservations can be made online at www.hamdenregionalchamber.com.

For more information about the Chamber Choice Awards or other Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce events and programs, please visit www.hamdenregionalchamber.com or contact the Chamber office at (203) 288-6431.

Fall Is Here With Beautiful Colored Trees



Pictured: A beautiful capture of the colorful trees.

North Haven: While traveling through North Haven and other towns you see the beautiful colored trees for all to enjoy. God gave us this and many other beautiful things to enjoy and have special memories.

Story and photo by Jo Ann Buccetti

Items Requested to Replenish Food Bank

North Haven: The Department of Community Services Food Bank is currently seeking assistance in replenishing several much-needed items, including pasta sauce, flavored rice, baked beans, canned chili, canned fruit, cookies, Pop-Tarts, peanut butter crackers, and cheese cracker snacks.

An Amazon wish list has been created to allow donations to be shipped directly to Community Services.

To access the wish list, select "Registry & Gift List" on the Amazon home page, click "Find a Registry," and search for "North Haven CS Food Bank."

Donations can also be made directly through the following link: https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/22SWBOJQ9FKB4

In addition, donations may be dropped off at the Department of Community Services, located at 5 Linsley Street, during business hours Monday-Friday from 9am-4pm.

For questions regarding donations, or for residents interested in accessing the food bank, please contact Robert Snurkowski at the Dept. of Community Services, Mon.-Fri. at (203) 239-5321 ext. 8502.

Are You Looking for a Rewarding Volunteer Tutor Job?

New Haven: If so, become a tutor at Springs Learning Center in New Haven. We are an educational Center supported and established by the Dominican Sisters of Peace. We provide a holistic literacy program for underserved adult learners with an emphasis on English as a Second Language.

To reach the Center, please call (203) 787-1025 or email annemarie.chuckrey@oppeace.org for further information. We encourage potential tutors to make an appointment and fill out an application.

Town of No. Branford Office of Social Service

ENERGY ASSISTANCE 2026-27 HEATING SEASON

This Office of Social Service energy assistance season began October 1 for Northford and North Branford residents. It is preferred that those that heat with a deliverable fuel such as oil, propane, or pellets are seen initially followed by utility heating customers.

Utility heating customers should participate in a program offered by the utility company; there are several programs to choose from. The programs offered are medical protection, matching program, balance forgiveness and the like. Information regarding programs offered by the utility companies is available in the Office of Social Service lobby. ***Although application appointments are now underway,the program begins on November 2.***

There are two ways to apply, you may apply online, following this link: https://portal.ct.gov/dss/economic-security/winter-heating-assistance/energy-assistance---winter-heating/how-to-apply or in this Office, by appointment. You must bring to your appointment copies of all your required documents. This office cannot make copies for you. Please bring all required documents. Applications can not be completed without the required documents, incomplete documents will result in a delay or denial.

If you are interested in applying for Energy Assistance, you may call North Branford Social Service at (203) 484-6006 or (475) 655-0412 to make an appointment.

A list of required documents needed to complete your application is available in both public libraries, online at https://www.northbranfordct.gov/252/Social-Services. and the Stanley T. Williams Community Center, Social Service Lobby. There are significant changes to the program.

This program is based on income and not assets. This is not an entitlement program. The program is designed to assist persons offset the cost of heating during the winter months, weatherize the home as well as assist with a replace or repair of a non operating furnace or boiler. The program no longer offers a clean, tune and test of the furnace.

HOLIDAY BASKET SHARE

The December Holiday Basket Share will take place on, Thursday December 17, 2026 For those that need some assistance with their Holiday dinner and/or gifts for children, you only need to contact the Office of Social Services and request to be a recipient in the December Holiday Basket Share. The requirements are that you are in need and a resident of North Branford or Northford. Your information is protected, and your name will not be disclosed. You must be able to pick up your basket or arrange for someone to pick it up for you. We are unable to deliver or bring it to your car.

For those wishing to donate a basket, you only need to call or email the Office of Social Service and express your desire to donate a Holiday Dinner Basket or a grocery store gift card, with or without children's gifts. You may choose the family size you would like to adopt. You may choose to do this alone, or as a group, with neighbors or co-workers. For those wishing to include children's gifts, this Office will provide you with the children's wish list.

Although names are not disclosed, a number will be given to both the recipient and the donor. This is used to identify which family is the recipient. All commitments by the donors and recipients will receive written confirmation. ***Last Day to be part of the Program as a recipient: Friday, November 13, 2026.*** Should you have an interest in being a recipient please contact Office of Social Service by email at ksperry@northbranfordct.gov or by phone at (203) 484-6006 by 11/13/2026. There is no end date for donors to participate. Donor drop off will be on 12/18 between 9:30-11am; recipient pick up will be between 11:30am-1pm.

2026-27 CT Energy Assistance Program

North Haven: The Community Services office is now conducting residents' appointments for the CT Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). Please note that depending on how you heat your home will determine your appointment time. Appointments will be conducted by phone on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am-11:15am.

If you heat with oil: You may call Community Services at this time.

If you heat with gas or electric: Call Community Services in **January 2027.**

If your heat is included in your rent: Call Community Services in **January 2027.**

Note: Your original lease that shows your heat is included in the rent will be required

Eligibility is based on total annual income of household members. To see if you qualify, for further explanation or to schedule your phone appointment, call Community Services at (203) 239-2566 any time between 9am-4pm, Monday through Friday.

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Wallingford Garden Club Participates At Celebrate Wallingford



Pictured Top: Bob Besaw, Karen Ciosek, Linda Besaw, Sue Surato, Linda Burr, and Karen Ciosek, Ann Cohen de Palma, Kris Diana. **Bottom:** Karen Ciosek, Kris Diana, and Alberta Flynn, Gail McCormack, Nancy Roseman, Ann Cohen De Palma.

Wallingford: The Wallingford Garden Club appreciated all who stopped by our booth. Many mentioned how appreciative they were of all the work the Garden Club does for the town.

Club members distributed reminders of the upcoming Holiday Tea at the Library Dec 8th. Items sold were hand crafted dried flower wreaths, small bags of lavender sachets, fresh flower bouquets all created by WGC members. Also available were tulip and daffodil bulbs, iris rhizomes and gardening gloves.

Many thanks to Kristin Diana and Ann Cohen DePalma, co-chairs of the festival, as well as their crew and all the member-donated items that helped in this annual fundraiser.

Wallingford Garden Club is a member of The Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut, Inc., New England Garden Clubs and National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Photos by Betty Wilson

Clean Energy Task Force Looking for New Members

North Haven: Are you concerned about our changing climate? Interested in helping North Haven residents, businesses, and our town government save energy and lower utility bills?

Want to help us to move to a clean energy economy? GREAT! You are just who we've been hoping would join us on the North Haven Clean Energy Task Force because we are looking for more members.

As a town-sponsored task force, we work closely with the town and residents to promote and provide opportunities for energy conservation and clean energy. We have had many successful campaigns, including promoting Home Energy Solutions energy assessments, with 40% of North Haven residents participating. We have also led campaigns to educate residents about home solar options and heat pumps, and connected them with local vendors to install these clean energy technologies so they can realize savings immediately. There is more work to be done!

Even with the clean energy setbacks at the federal level, there are many energy efficiency and clean energy rebates and services available in Connecticut.

To find out more and get involved, please contact Kenny Foscue at kfosc@snet.net or call (203) 589-1512.

District 23A Lions Clubs

APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

District 23A Lions Clubs -- New Haven & Fairfield Counties are now accepting applications (Scan QR code). Communities in the local area that have Lions Clubs are: Cheshire, East Haven, Hamden, New Haven, North Haven, Wallingford, and West Haven.

Lions Clubs are looking for fun, positive community members dedicated to making a difference. The benefits are Leadership Growth, Community Impact, Networking and Friendship, Global Reach, and Local Action.

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3rd Marine Division Association Seeking Members

The Third Marine Division Association invites anyone who served with/or in direct support of the 3rd Marine Division at any time to join our association.

For a membership application or more information, please contact Ray Kelley at (508) 459-9937 or mgkm60@yahoo.com.

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Consider Asking Yourself The Following Question:

By B.L. -- A Long-term Resident of North Haven with 58 Years of Community Experience

When solar panels need to be temporarily removed to repair a roof leak or replace the roof, what is the typical cost for removal and reinstallation? Can quotes be obtained directly from the original installer? Additionally, is there a list of licensed contractors who are authorized to perform this work?

Are monthly payment plans available for these services? Finally, does the town require a permit for the removal and reinstallation of solar panels?