



# *Sterling House*

COMMUNITY CENTER

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **‘Ladies Who Inspire Luncheon’ May 18; Features Moms’ Make-a-Wish CT stories**

Four Stratford Make-a-Wish CT mothers will be among those honored this year at Sterling House Community Center’s annual “Ladies Who Inspire Luncheon” to be held on May 18 at Mill River Country Club, Stratford.

The event benefits Sterling House programs and will begin at 11:30 a.m. The featured guest speaker will be Lori O’Driscoll, a very special Make-a-Wish CT mother from Monroe.

In addition, a special ‘Ladies Who Inspire’ recognition will also be made to 100-year-old Mary Hardy, who was Sterling House’s first executive director and is still living at home in Stratford.

According to Stratford resident and Make-a-Wish CT’s Chief Development Officer Tara Navara, the town of Stratford alone in the history of the Make-a-Wish CT program has had more than 70 families receive special wishes granted to children with severe illnesses.

Navara noted that “Make-A-Wish believes that a wish experience can be a game-changer for a child with a life-threatening medical condition. This one belief guides us in everything we do and it inspires us to grant wishes that change the lives of the kids we serve.”

Navara noted that all the Stratford families have their own stories to tell, citing three families in particular whose Moms will be recognized for their inspiring work at the luncheon on May 18.

Dana Faerdy is a Stratford Mom whose son, Quinn, age 7, had his wish to go to Disney in 2014. At age 4-months, Quinn received a heart transplant due to a virus that caused heart failure. “He was in-and-out of the hospital for about 10 months in his first year, but battled through it all,” Navara noted.

Then, in July 2014, Quinn was found to have an extremely rare genetic disorder that required a bone marrow transplant from his brother, and throughout “his Mom Dana has been his true champion and has given up everything, including removing his siblings from school and moving across the country for medical care, to save his life.”

Another Stratford Mom, Carol Antrum, not only has tended to her son’s battle with cancer, she now volunteers her time at the local Make-a-Wish CT office in Trumbull to help make other kids wishes come true. Her son, Chris, age 17, had his wish to go to Costa Rica in 2013. Chris battled

cancer when he was younger and now is part of the Make-A-Wish Club at Stratford High School and is active with the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp and Camp Rising Sun.

Kristi Bacik is a Stratford Mom whose son, Jimmy, age 12, had his wish to swim with the dolphins in Hawaii granted in 2011. Jimmy had a tumor behind his eye which left him legally blind. But rather than giving up or treating him differently, Kristi raised him without limitations and Jimmy is today an expert water skier!

Also present to be recognized will be the family of Tanisha Smith, another Make-a-Wish CT recipient family from Stratford.

The luncheon will culminate this year with a presentation by Make-a-Wish Mom, Lori O'Driscoll of Monroe, who tragically lost her 12-year-old daughter, Ciara, this last January 16 due to complications from Dravet Syndrome, a form of childhood onset epilepsy. O'Driscoll will tell the heroic story of Ciara, who in her short life became a poster child and eloquent spokesperson herself in the ongoing search for a Dravet Syndrome cure for a foundation started by O'Driscoll.

As Lori herself tells it in the periodical *Epilepsia*, "The day started out as any other. My then five-and-one-half month-old daughter, Ciara, and I were walking around the aisles of our local grocery store. One minute my sweet baby was smiling and cooing, and the next she was shaking and unresponsive. I remember sprinting through the store, frantically asking for paramedics and for help.

"That was Ciara's first seizure. It was a 25-min long tonic-clonic. It was terrifying and it changed our lives. At the time, we knew nothing of the epilepsy world. We believed the doctors that it was most likely a one-time event, provoked by a fever. But the seizures kept coming and didn't let up."

At this year luncheon, attendees will hear more about these intensely personal and heroic stories of these "Ladies Who Inspire."

For more information and tickets, which are limited, please call Sterling House at (203) 378-2606, ext. 106, or by email at: [ccarroll@sterlinghousecc.org](mailto:ccarroll@sterlinghousecc.org).