



# Sterling House

COMMUNITY CENTER

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## Sterling House helps Mary Hardy celebrate milestone 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

STRATFORD, CT (December 12, 2016) - Members of the Sterling House Community Center staff recently dropped in to visit the agency's first executive director, Mary Hardy, at her home on Academy Hill to greet her as she approached her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, which occurred in late November.

Current Executive Director Amanda Meeson led the delegation to greet Hardy with a bouquet of roses, 'Happy Birthday' balloons, a large picture of Hardy in the old Sterling House kitchen, and a birthday card signed by staff, all to the delight of Hardy, who beamed her appreciation.

"Oh what a nice surprise to see everyone,"

Hardy said as the group met with her in the

kitchen of her home on Academy Hill Road, just down the street from Sterling House, where she was the agency's first executive director.

Joining Meeson in visiting Hardy was Office Manager Donna Kelly, Senior Director of Athletics Bill O'Brien, Special Events Coordinator Patty Calabrese, former Development Director Diane Sheridan and current Development Director Chris Carroll.



Visiting Mary Hardy, sitting with flowers, were, left to right standing, Bill O'Brien, Patty Calabrese, Chris Carroll, Diane Sheridan, Donna Kelly and kneeling, right, Sterling House Executive Director Amanda Meeson.



**Mary Hardy and the poster of her in the old Sterling House kitchen.**

Closely eyeing Meeson and the rest of the staff, Hardy said, “You are doing just fine. I can tell.”

Prompted by her visitors, Hardy related that times were not always easy at Sterling House, especially in its early years. “We didn’t have a lot of money, but we had a good time,” she recalled.

In those days, Hardy wore a lot of hats, as did other staff and volunteers. She was particularly interested in the large picture reproduction the visitors brought with them of her. It showed Hardy, teapot in hand, in the old Sterling House agency kitchen.

When asked by Meeson if she had any advice for the current staff, Hardy said, “You have to keep the money coming in. It’s not an easy job. You have to keep an eye on the money” because the upkeep of the Sterling House mansion, built in 1885, is expensive, as are costs associated with running programs.

In 2017, Sterling House will be celebrating its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its founding 1932. Amazingly, the agency has had only three executive directors in all that time. In its earliest years, Sterling House was run by volunteers. Hardy began her career there as an executive secretary prior to being named executive director.

At the time of the visit in early November, Hardy’s husband, Vincent, was resting in bed in an adjoining room. Vincent Hardy, 96, passed away just two weeks later on Nov. 21 at home.

For his part, Vincent was a vital Sterling House volunteer during his wife’s tenure as executive director. After Vincent’s retirement from Sikorsky in 1985, he was the de facto “Sterling House handyman,” making many repairs and improvements around the mansion, she said.

Closely reviewing her visitors again, and seeing two men, Hardy quipped, “You have to keep these men around. We didn’t have that many men when I was there, so I would call Vin all the time to help.”



**Pictured are two youth volunteers from the Sterling House S.T.R.O.B.E. program raking leaves at Mary Hardy's home on Academy Hill in late November.**

After singing a chorus of "Happy Birthday," everyone shared refreshments along with Hardy's United Methodist Church friend, Marilyn, and then the group posed for a picture, taken by Hardy's attending nurse, Doreen.

"Please come by soon and visit again," Hardy entreated her visitors as they were leaving.

Several weeks later, youth volunteers from Sterling House's S.T.R.O.B.E. program came to the Hardy house to rake leaves, part of an ongoing program led by Program and Volunteer Coordinator Pam

Robertson. Perhaps that leaf-raking visit to the Hardy home from these youth volunteers from Sterling House epitomized best how the agency has served the community through the years!

Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Mary Hardy, from everyone at Sterling House Community Center!