

Darienite

News for Darien

<https://darienite.com>

Meet the Six 'Women of Distinction' To Be Honored Thursday by YWCA of Darien-Norwalk

Author : David Gurliacci

Categories : [Darienites](#)

Tagged as : [Women of Distinction 2018](#), [YWCA Darien Norwalk 2018](#)

Date : May 9, 2018

These six Darien and Norwalk women will be celebrated Thursday by YWCA Darien/Norwalk and a crowd of well-wishers at the 2018 Women of Distinction Awards and Luncheon at Woodway Country Club.

Darienite
News for Darien
This year's distinguished honorees at the annual event are Carrie Bernier, Tina Duryea, Scarlett Lewis, Allison Molkenthin and Wendy Ward, along with Emma Dahlquist, named this year's Young Woman of Distinction, an award recognizing outstanding accomplishments of a woman under 21.
<https://darienite.com>

The Women of Distinction Award is bestowed in recognition of the outstanding achievements of a select group of women. Local residents and business owners nominate women who live or work in Darien and Norwalk whose significant and unique contributions have made a difference in our community.

The YWCA website is no longer accepting registrations for the lunch.

Here are descriptions of each of this year's Women of Distinction as provided by the YWCA of Darien/Norwalk:

Scarlett Lewis

Scarlett Lewis founded the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement after her son was murdered during the Sandy Hook tragedy in December 2012.

Shortly after his death, Scarlett decided to be part of the solution to the issues that we're seeing in our society—and that also caused the tragedy.

She created the Movement and became an advocate for social and emotional learning (SEL) that teaches children how to manage their emotions, feel connected, and have healthy relationships.

Scarlett works to promote the Choose Love Enrichment Program™, a free, comprehensive, evidence-based SEL program that empowers educators and their students to choose love for themselves and others.

While we can't always choose what happens to us, we can choose how we respond. This program teaches children how to handle adversity, have courageous conversations, and to respond with love.

Scarlett has been instrumental in changing legislation to incorporate SEL into schools. The Jesse Lewis Empowering Educators Act was introduced by Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal and, in December 2015, Congress approved Every Student Succeeds Act.

Scarlett graduated from Boston University with a B.S. in Communications in 1990. She has worked in the finance industry as a bond trader, investment banker and real estate. Scarlett is an artist and avid horsewoman; she lives in Connecticut with her son, JT.

Allison Molkenthin

Meet Allison Molkenthin, one of our 2018 Women of Distinction. Allison is an effective and powerful volunteer leader for the empowerment of diverse women in Connecticut, bringing underrepresented voices to the table, working with marginalized communities and working to close the inequality gap in early childhood education.

Professionally, Allison advises companies with diverse management teams that expand economic opportunity and has helped fund companies in the US, Europe and Africa.

Allison is passionate about the empowerment of women and girls. In 2017 Allison spearheaded the launch of the CT affiliate of Emerge America, which trains diverse women candidates to run for public office. Serving on the advisory board, Allison recruits candidates and raises funds to teach women the required skills to win elections. Emerge's first class in CT is training 23 candidates, with forty percent women of color.

Allison has been a Trustee of the non-profit Waterford Institute for over fifteen years. Waterford provides research based software to bridge the equality gap in early childhood reading-readiness nationwide, helped by an \$11.3 million federal i3 grant.

Allison has also been a Girl Scout leader for three troops over fourteen years. She was awarded outstanding leader, and daughters Allegra and Christina have received their Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award possible, and Octavia is working on it.

Allison has lived in Darien with her husband and daughters since '02 and received her degree in Mechanical Engineering and Comp. Lit. from Brown, her MBA from INSEAD and was a Fulbright Scholar in Morocco.

Carrie Bernier

For more than 25 years, Carrie Bernier has been a passionate advocate for social justice.

Bernier's commitment to public service started after her college graduation, when she volunteered for Volunteers in Service to America (V.I.S.T.A.) in North Dakota to serve Native American and rural victims of domestic violence as a community educator at the Domestic Violence Crisis Center.

After earning her law degree, Bernier was selected to lead the Stamford specialized criminal court docket prosecuting crimes of domestic violence. Balancing a career she loved and dedication to her growing family, Bernier later returned to the nonprofit sector to open the first legal department at Stamford's Domestic Violence Crisis Center, where she started a civil legal clinic and oversaw victim advocates in criminal court.

In 2013, Bernier assumed the role of Executive Director of The Community Fund of Darien. At The Community Fund, Bernier oversees a philanthropic portfolio with investments of more than \$1 million dollars annually in Stamford, Norwalk and Darien nonprofits and community initiatives. She guided the innovative "Our Darien" campaign to prevent underage binge drinking, and created TheImpactVine.org, a crowdfunding website for nonprofits.

In June, Bernier will assume the role of Executive Director of the Norwalk Community College Foundation. There, Bernier is looking forward to advancing opportunities for a diverse student body by expanding access to affordable, quality higher education and supporting the development of a productive workforce.

Carrie Bernier has lived in Darien with her husband and four daughters for seventeen years.

Emma Dahlquist

Meet Emma Dahlquist, the 2018 Young Woman of Distinction. Emma has been a member of the Community Fund's Youth Asset Team for three years.

In addition to her DHS YAT involvement, she helped lead bi-weekly YAT meetings for middle schoolers. Emma immediately connected with the students, and volunteered to increase her involvement when she saw the need for leaders.

Emma was an obvious choice when the Community Fund was asked to choose a youth representative to serve on Connecticut's Youth Advisory Council on substance abuse at the state level. Her thoughtfulness, energy and creativity at Council meetings was appreciated!

Emma was elected as one of four Youth Asset Team Presidents for the 2017-2018 school year. She is a constant contributor, helping to plan multiple events such as the Chris Herren speaking engagements at DHS, and the panel/ presentation of the film "Haze."

Emma's community service extends well beyond the YAT organization. She has taught religious education for four years at St. Thomas More Catholic Parish, and is an active member of the Youth Group.

Emma participated in the "Midnight Run," distributing clothing and food to the homeless of NYC. Emma is a Link Leader at DHS, and a member of two national honor societies, helping tutor at the high school level. She is a varsity athlete, and spent last summer rebuilding houses and public gardens in New Orleans.

Emma is most definitely a Young Woman of Distinction, and is off to study at Bucknell University in the fall!

Tina Duryea

Meet Tina Duryea. Tina is a Darien native, class of DHS '90, who now lives in Rowayton. She has long been active in civil rights issues, including Black Lives Matter, Gun Violence Prevention and the broader feminist movement.

In 2014 she met with Gabby Giffords to talk about how local, grassroots actions and social media can induce gun control reform at the local and national levels. In 2015 she launched a petition to the White House to ban assault rifles, which lead to a call from Joe Biden and numerous media mentions from various politicians, including our congressman and both CT senators.

In March 2017, Tina helped organize an event at St Lukes, "Meet your Muslim neighbor", and recruited

speakers from Darien and other surrounding towns. Recently, Tina was selected for the Norwalk Democratic Town Committee to represent District E, with the goal of being able to impact the upcoming state midterm elections and have a greater voice in state politics.

Tina has an active social media presence of more than 8,000 engaged followers across multiple platforms. She uses her online presence to promote awareness of both broad political issues and specific actionable local events and to encourage involvement in politics.

An accomplished painter, Tina's art fosters discussions and inspires people to get involved in politics. Her recent 'Portrait Project' of positive political figures has been gaining attention from prominent members in politics and media. She recently contributed a portrait of Hillary Rodham Clinton to the soon to be released book 'The Revolution is Female'.

Tina believes that civic engagement is the price we pay to live in a democracy.

Wendy Ward

Meet Wendy Ward, 2018 Women of Distinction Nominee. Wendy also a Darien native, DHS '91, has dedicated much of her recent career to supporting the social, emotional, mental and behavioral health of youth and families.

Wendy, a mother of two daughters, co-founded and is the co-CEO of the Youth Mental Health Project (YMHP). YMHP empowers families and communities to act with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to support youth mental health.

Together with Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, Connecticut, Wendy wrote a booklet illustrating the ages and stages of youth mental health development, called "Understanding Youth Mental Health."

In partnership with Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County, she developed a 32-page guide for parents called "Understanding Youth Mental Health: Questions Parents Frequently Ask".

Wendy has also spent the last seven years educating parents and children on the need for social-emotional learning. She has traveled globally to speak at events, run workshops and training sessions.

As a Kimochis facilitator, she has taught parents, educators, mental health providers, and physicians. Kimochis help children and adults identify and express feelings, working through them to live more resiliently.

In addition to her work with YMHP, Wendy is the co-chair of The Council of Darien School Parents, has volunteered with The Community Fund, is a board member of The Fairfield County Swim League and even volunteered on the town Recycling Advisory Committee.

Darienite

News for Darien

<https://darienite.com>

She has also worked with local stakeholders to bring speakers to the community including Kerry Kennedy (Stand Against Racism), Marina Parker (Domestic Abuse) and Jamie Nabozny (workshops on the dangers of bullying). Wendy has been an active and positive force advocating for social-emotional learning.

Her work helps families navigate raising a whole child because just like physical health we all have mental health.