

Grants to community causes issued

The First County Bank Foundation's \$50,000 small grant program issued the last of its 2010 funds to area non-profits last week. For many of these organizations it was the first time they applied for funds from the foundation. Since mid-April, 26 nonprofits were awarded grants in amounts of \$500 to \$2,500.

"The small grant program was a welcome addition to our foundation's giving plan and enabled us to attain our goal of helping more communities in lower Fairfield County," said First County Bank Foundation Vice President Katherine Harris. Small grants, defined as grants of \$2,500 or less for those applicants who fit the regular grant criteria, and \$1,000 or less for those applicants that do not fit the regular grant criteria, were available since April 1. "And we look forward to seeing all of our grant recipients at this year's annual celebration," added Harris.

The annual event, to be held on Monday, Dec. 13, at UConn Stamford, is an invitation only event to honor and celebrate the nonprofit organizations benefiting economic development, housing, children and families living and working in lower Fairfield County.

"This 'Celebration of Mutual Partnership' that the bank hosts every year is meant to showcase some of the great work our nonprofit organizations do for the local community," Rey Giallongo, president of The First County Bank Foundation, said. "While the foundation continues to make significant contributions to our community partners in a difficult economic environment, First County Bank's board of directors, corporators and employees are intent on keeping this tradition of giving in the forefront of all we do."

To be eligible, organizations must have nonprofit tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; be located in Stamford, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk or Westport; have community support; address community needs; have measurable outcomes; and demonstrate fiscal and administrative responsibility. Special consideration is given to those agencies or programs benefiting low to moderate income populations.

"Because there are thousands of nonprofits in Fairfield County, the First County Bank Foundation expanded the period of time for filling out applications and also expanded eligibility for many organizations in need of financial support throughout the year," Harris explained. Since issuing its first 2010 grant in March to United Way of Western Connecticut, the First County Bank Foundation has granted more than \$570,900 to 101 nonprofit organizations throughout lower Fairfield County. Since its creation in 2001, the foundation has been able to award more than 450 grants totaling more than \$4 million to various community organizations.

Established in honor of the bank's 150th anniversary, the First County Bank Foundation was created to distribute funds annually to nonprofit organizations that support community and economic development for children and families. As a mutual bank with no shareholders, First County Bank considers contributions made by the foundation a means of paying dividends back to the local communities it serves.

First County Bank, headquartered in Stamford, Conn., is an independent mutual community bank with 15 branches in Stamford, Greenwich, Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk and Westport offering deposit products, mortgages, trust and investment services, business banking services and online banking. First County Bank has assets in excess of \$1.3 billion. For additional information, visit www.firstcountybank.com.