

## Club honors those who make a difference for kids

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Councilman Sal Anderton, left, principal of Washington Elementary School Marie DeMaio, West Orange resident Jim Fotinopoulos, and Councilman Rob Parisi all receive awards for making a difference in the lives of children.

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WEST ORANGE, NJ - The Boys & Girls Club of West Orange recently held its first awards dinner to celebrate the people who made a significant impact on the club this year. The banquet was sponsored by the organization's Parents' Activities Committee and was held at the West Orange Elks Lodge 1590.

Among those honored were Marie DeMaio, principal at Washington Elementary School, and Councilmen Rob Parisi and Sal Anderton, both of whom attended the club before the Boys & Girls Club became incorporated into the West Orange Community House.

The committee honored West Orange resident Jim Fotinopoulos as one of the Volunteers of the Year. Joining him were Tony LaFerrara and Linda Knoll and BGCWO program director Heath Gertner, who received an honor as well.



Anderton received the Friend of the Club Award.

"Being honored along with Marie DeMaio, my second grade teacher, was incredibly meaningful to me personally," said Anderton. "Sharing the stage with her and the other honorees made me feel proud that I am still contributing to my neighborhood and that I am not alone in my concern for the children of our community."

The loudest applause of the evening came when Principal DeMaio received the Community Education

Leadership Award. Gertner explained why.

"It was great to see how much of a positive impact she has had as almost all guests, from parents, teachers and other honorees had a connection with Ms. DeMaio ... and that two of her former students (Anderton and Parisi) are both leaders in the community and also honorees is a testament to her and West Orange."

The PAC, made up of parents with children in both Washington School and Redwood Elementary School, honored her for her work in helping to secure the Boys & Girls Club's largest after-school site.

"It meant a great deal to me that the club was appreciative of all my efforts on behalf of the kids of West Orange," DeMaio said.

Parisi was given the award as the club's Board Member of the Year. A member of the club's board for more than a decade, the PAC honored him because he stood out this year not just for his duties as a board member but also for willingly committing himself to participating in events and for taking an active role in assisting club member Alex Hyppolite receive a scholarship to attend a prestigious Youth Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.

Volunteers of the year were Fotinopoulos, LaFerrara and Knoll.

"Volunteers can make some of the greatest impacts on our youth's lives, and these three are no exception. Their dedication to the kids is unmatched," said Shamara Gonzalez, whose son Shamik participates in the class. All three have been volunteering their time to teach the karate style Ishin ryu for the past two years.

The evening ended with the PAC surprising Gertner with the Visionary/Community Leadership Award.

"The PAC felt Heath earned and deserved this honor for his hard work and truly dedicated spirit toward all the youth of West Orange. Heath works many tiring and long days and nights brainstorming new ideas to help promote new projects for the youth and the PAC truly appreciates that," parent Kim White said.

For more information on the Boys & Girls Club of West Orange call 973-736-1282 ext.19.