



Terry and Lorraine in the Gym at the Shehan Center

FEATURED MEMBERS:

The Dynamic Duo: Lorraine and Terry of the Cardinal Shehan Center

"I can't remember one major decision I've made in the last decade without consulting her, first," says Terry O'Conner about Lorraine Gibbons. Known as the dynamic duo, they are a force to be reckoned with.

He says he was attracted to her because she came from outside the nonprofit world. Lorraine says, "No one has more contacts than Terry," she says. "And, nobody works harder." Lorraine decided to stay because of the organization's mission.

When Terry joined the Shehan Center 23 years ago as the Executive Director, they were in the red. Today, under his leadership, the annual budget is two million dollars. He's added nine additional annual fundraising events, including: a dodge ball tournament (made up of corporate teams and additional sponsors); Stump the Schwab, which is a sports trivia contest headed by Howie Schwab, former ESPN sports trivia expert; the Great Shehan Trivia Contest, a celebrity breakfast for 500 business people from the community whom enjoy noteworthy individuals like Jack Welch of GE discuss various topics (and a youth member always speaks about how the Shehan Center has impacted his or her life); and, March Madness, a party that initiates on the first night of the NCAA Men's College Basketball tournament. He has also expanded many of the programs, increasing the number of youth served annually from 2,500 when he first arrived to 4,500 today. Summer camp currently cares for 300 kids for seven weeks. This has all been

accomplished with only two additional staff members since Terry was first hired.

Founded in 1962 with a mission "to enrich lives through learning," The Cardinal Shehan Center is a youth organization primarily focused on afterschool and summer camp programming. It serves children in Kindergarten through 12th grades. Volunteer and work opportunities at the Shehan Center are available for high school teens as well. Program offerings include: homework help, tutoring conducted by Fairfield and Sacred Heart University students (in which 97% of students improve their performance by at least one letter grade), Fitness For Life (nutrition and physical fitness skills), cooking, sailing (at Sailaway Sailing School in Captains Cove in the summer), golf (at Fairfield's Fairchild Wheeler course) and photography (utilizing the Shehan Center's own darkroom), job training and more.

Terry believes strongly that a nonprofit should be run like a for-profit. He states emphatically, "we have employees, a payroll and a 55,000 square foot building in which we have to keep the lights on and rent paid. Just like other corporations, we have to generate revenue and live within our means" Lorraine's MBA and previous work as an Accountant, Senior Financial Analyst and Corporate Communications Officer meshed perfectly with his belief system and strong aspirations to continually move the organization forward.

Since Lorraine came on board in 2005 as the Director of Development, she has accomplished much, including significant expansion of the grants pool, and conceiving of and starting up The Girls' Zone, which provides a space for young women to talk about issues affecting them and a host of other opportunities such as workshops on role models and cyberbullying, the Job Training Program, and The Leadership Program for 4th-8th graders. A major focus in this program is on high school and college preparation, and job readiness. The participants learn how to develop a resume through writing skills workshops, they practice interviewing skills, learn workplace etiquette and how to dress properly. Each class creates, plans, and carries out a volunteer project. In past years, the young people have solicited food donations and assembled Thanksgiving baskets for families in need, and collected blankets, scarves and toiletries for those served by the Bridgeport Rescue Mission. This is one of Lorraine's favorite programs, in part, because it has a lot of interest from the community and funders, and it is self-sustaining.



Lorraine and Terry in the newly renovated Shehan Center music room

Terry is partial to the aquatic classes. There is a large pool inside the Shehan Center which provides the venue for youth swimming lessons. He says, "We live on the water and many kids go to the beach. Our swimming lessons are so important because they save lives-especially in the African American community in Bridgeport."

And the Shehan Center has basketball leagues galore. Youth arrive at the Center from towns stretching from Greenwich to New Haven. There are Shehan teams made up of 4th through 8th graders (the spring teams alone has 400 players), and high school varsity leagues throughout Fairfield County take advantage of the Shehan gym. Terry, by the way, in the early days of his career was a basketball coach at Harvard University and Fairfield University, and coached a number of United States Basketball League teams before arriving at the Shehan Center. He earned a Master's Degree in Physical Education in 1971.

Programs that they've enjoyed the most over the years? Lorraine recalls the playground build while Terry fondly remembers Kids and Critters. In 2011, Shehan participants applied nontoxic paint to canvasses, which were then placed in the living areas of a variety of animals at the Beardsley Zoo. The result was colorful masterpieces with the perfectly unique footprints of birds, lions, tigers, wolves and other mammals. The children took photos of the animals walking on their pictures and displayed them alongside their paintings. There was a formal exhibit opening with wine and cheese, and students, parents and Board members attended. As you can imagine, fun was had by all.

The organization's partnership with Stop and Shop and the Kaboom organization made the 2009 erection of the impressive looking Shehan Center playground possible. Kaboom is a nonprofit that builds inner city playgrounds. Lorraine loves that they were able to have kids, their moms and dads, along with Shehan staff and Kaboom-work together to design the playground for the youth's needs. More than 100 volunteers showed up for the community build. Not only was their manpower essential, but Shehan got to know new volunteers and potential donors through the process. For the ribbon cutting ceremony, the kids made cookies and cupcakes in the newly renovated Shehan student kitchen.

As for AFP-Fairfield County, you can't find stronger proponents than Terry or Lorraine. Terry has been a member for 15 years and recalls that Steve Jakab, family friend and the President of the Bridgeport Hospital Foundation, was the person that first invited him to get involved. Terry has made sure that every individual he has ever hired became an AFP-Fairfield County member as

well. He served on the AFP board from 2005-2008 and attends as many luncheons as he can, and the annual national conference. He says, "People ask me why I still come-suggesting that I should know it all after having been around for so long. I tell them that I like to hear about work issues from another's perspective, and I always learn at least one thing from every AFP program." In 2009 Terry received the "AFP-Fairfield County Outstanding Fundraiser of the Year" award, thanks in part to Lorraine's nomination.

It's hard to believe but it's true. They have never had a major dispute -- in 10 years. Terry spends most of his time meeting and cultivating potential donors, then handing off contacts to Lorraine to utilize in programming, for funding, events or sponsorships. She is happy he is not a micromanager. Terry says that "he has full faith in her ability to run the development department and never worries that she won't get something done." Lorraine says, "she understands him, fully; knows what makes him tick," and that this insight helps to propel them forward. Their easy, relaxed fondness for each other is obvious. They have accomplished so much -for the benefit of kids and families in Bridgeport.

Truly, Lorraine and Terry ARE -- the dynamic duo.

By Anne Tack

Upcoming Events

May 4 Roundtable Discussion

[**PROGRAM UPDATE! Roundtable Dinner - The 2016 Presidential Election - and - How It Could Impact Your Nonprofit!**](#)

The Norwalk Inn and Conference Center, Norwalk

Schedule:

5:30 socializing - cash bar

6:00 dinner and round table discussion

PLEASE NOTE: There has been a program change for this event. There will not be a formal presentation by Jason Lee on Wednesday but rather a roundtable dinner discussion at "Adam's Rib," at the Norwalk Inn.

All are welcome.

1.5 CFRE credits

May 5 Breakfast

[**Ensuring Ethics Has a Seat at the Table in Your Organization; Sponsored by Dylewsky, Goldberg & Brenner, LLC**](#)

The Norwalk Inn and Conference Center, Norwalk

7:30 - 9:30 a.m

Registration/networking starts at 7:30 a.m., and the buffet opens/meeting starts promptly at 8:00.

\$25 for members, \$45 for non-members. All are welcome.

1.5 CFRE credits

June 23 and 24 CFRE Review Course

[**Held at University of New Haven - click for details and to register**](#)

Photos

March 17 St. Patrick's Day Luncheon, "Maximizing Philanthropic Impact Through Planned Giving" with speaker, Jennifer Pagnillo, Esq., Day Pitney LLC



Speaker, Jennifer Pagnillo, Esq., Day Pitney LLC



**AFP-FC Board Members,
David Schlakman and Meghan Rickard**



**AFP-FC Board Members, Mary Ferrara and
Donna Schmidt with AFP Member,
Linda Christensen**

April 19 Toast After Taxes Networking Night at Taberna, Fairfield



**AFP-FC Board Member, Anne Tack with
Owner/Chef/Host, Daniel Lopez**



**AFP Members,
Kimberly Pugh and John Brannelly**

New Members

Brandi Bufford

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Analyst
Untamed Capital LLC

Kaitlin Marinelli
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Contact Information

For more information on AFP Fairfield County, visit our website at: <http://www.afpfairfield.org>.

For questions related to membership or to get involved with an AFP Board Committee, please contact Lorraine Gibbons at lgibbons@shehancenter.org.

For questions about events, contact Colleen Harkey at charkey@optonline.net.

For questions or comments about the newsletter, please contact AFP board member, Anne Tack at Tackwriters@aol.com.

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