



formerly The Women's Center of Greater Danbury

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Hearts of Hope Breakfast on March 8<sup>th</sup> was the Place to Be**

DANBURY, March 15 The Center for Empowerment & Education's (CEE) 15<sup>th</sup> annual Hearts of Hope Breakfast was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at the Candlewood Inn in Brookfield. The Candlewood Inn generously donates the venue, food, and waitstaff service for this event in support of CEE's critical programs and services that are needed now more than ever.

This year's "Service Above Self" honorees were mother and daughter, Jacqueline and Eva Aveiga, with the awards presented by State Senator Julie Kushner. Jacqueline and Eva are dedicated supporters of CEE and are avid advocates of empowering all individuals.

"Thank you so much to CEE for selecting us this year as the Service Above Self Award honorees. This organization holds a dear place in our hearts as it coincides perfectly with our mission to empower and uplift all individuals at Miss & Teen Danbury CT. CEE is such an amazing organization and to see the room full of inspiring individuals and businesses supporting their work to provide services at no cost to sexual assault and domestic violence victims was powerful," said Eva Aveiga, 2023 Service Above Self Award recipient.

The theme of this year's event was "How Our Stories Impact Theirs." Brave and resilient staff members of CEE shared their lived experiences on paper and were so beautifully and respectfully brought to life by several of CEE's Board members. The stories displayed survival, thriving, and hope and it's clear that the CEE staff has had an amazing impact on the community.

"People with lived experience should not be considered as the walking wounded. Instead, they should be looked at as experts because of their experience and as a result, their expertise can affect lasting change. Because of the path that a victim has walked, new policies and laws are born. It takes these experiences for decision-makers to put a face to a story and understand the significance of their role in developing, passing, and implementing trauma-informed processes, policies, and laws. We need to embed lived experience and the voices of survivors into every aspect of interpersonal violence programs and advocacy," said Ashley Dunn, CEE President and CEO.

If you'd like to get more involved with CEE and help us continue the work of changing stories from survivor to thriver, contact us at [thecenter@thecenterct.org](mailto:thecenter@thecenterct.org).

### **Background:**

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The Center for Empowerment and Education (CEE) is a non-profit organization with a vision to end violence against women, men and children, and to foster equality and empowerment for all. We serve the needs of individuals and families in Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, and Sherman. We provide education, counseling, crisis intervention, and support services with regard to domestic violence, sexual assault, and other major life transitions. Since our founding in 1975, CEE has provided a safe haven as the sole provider of domestic abuse and sexual assault survivor services in the Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield County areas. The organization serves over 30,000 individuals with free and confidential services that are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We're here to talk about it.

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