

50 Years of Empowerment: Celebrating the Founders Who Paved the Way at CEE's Annual Dinner

DANBURY, CT, March 10, 2025— The Center for Empowerment and Education (CEE) is proud to celebrate its 50th Anniversary with a special Annual Dinner on April 11, 2025, honoring the past, present, and future of its mission to create a community free from interpersonal violence (IPV). This milestone event will pay tribute to the remarkable visionaries who founded what was originally known as the Women's Center of Greater Danbury, recognizing their lasting contributions while celebrating those who continue to drive the organization forward today. We are proud to announce our Honorary Co-Chairs, Pamela Chapman and Carla Pierce. Pam and Carla are both daughters of two of CEE's founding members and they play a unique and historic role in CEE's legacy.

In honor of the past, CEE will recognize one of its founding members, Betti Corso. Betti, alongside fellow founders Alice Chapman and Bonnie Law, played a pivotal role in establishing a sanctuary for women facing IPV, discrimination, and inequality. Their unwavering commitment to advocacy, empowerment, and justice laid the foundation for CEE's work over the past five decades. The dinner will also honor CEE's dedicated staff for their relentless efforts in carrying out the organization's mission today and celebrate the future by recognizing Girls Inspiring Girls of Newtown, a group of young leaders dedicated to fostering empowerment and social change with CEE's prestigious Founders Award.

In celebration of Women's History Month, CEE honors the passion and vision of its founders, whose dedication led to the creation of the Women's Center of Greater Danbury—now CEE—which has proudly provided 50 years of uninterrupted service to the communities it serves.

Celebrating Alice Chapman – A Trailblazing Advocate for Women's Rights and Social Justice

Alice Chapman was a force of nature—a feminist before her time, a political activist, and one of the visionaries who co-founded what is now CEE. She saw the urgent need for a space where women could find community, support, and resources—and she made it happen.

From launching Danbury's first rape crisis hotline in her home, to helping establish CEE's emergency domestic violence shelter, Alice's leadership directly changed countless lives. Her work extended beyond Danbury—she was a national leader in the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment, served as National Treasurer of NOW and advocated across the country.

Honorary Chair, Pamela Chapman who is Alice's daughter shares "My mom was a feminist and activist throughout her life and she taught me to be the same."

Alice's impact is woven into everything CEE does today.

Honoring Betti Corso – A Founding Force for Justice

Fifty years ago, Betti Corso helped plant the seeds of what is now CEE—a place where women could speak, be heard, and find strength together. A fearless advocate for equality and justice, Betti stood on the frontlines of movements for the Equal Rights Amendment, reproductive rights, and anti-violence initiatives.

As a single mother of nine, balancing work, school, and activism, Betti's resilience was nothing short of remarkable. She never backed down from injustice, and her unwavering dedication shaped CEE into what it is today—a place of advocacy, safety, and empowerment.

CEE is honored to celebrate Betti's legacy with a special award at their 50th Anniversary Annual Dinner. What is even more special? Betti will be there to celebrate the night in person!

"I am extremely proud of my mom and her legacy, not just at CEE, but the important life lessons she has taught me, which have made me a better person. She taught me how to accept and to give unconditional love, that it is nice to be important



but it is more important to be nice; and everyone deserves courtesy, kindness, justice and love and so many other lessons by her love and actions,” said Carla Pierce, Betti’s daughter and 50th anniversary dinner Honorary Chair.

Celebrating Bonnie Law – A Visionary for Empowerment and Equality

As CEE celebrates 50 years, they remember Bonnie Law, one of their incredible founders. Bonnie’s vision and relentless advocacy for women’s rights and breaking the cycle of abuse helped shape the mission and services to what it is today.

Driven by a deep passion for equality, justice, and empowerment, Bonnie saw the urgent need for a safe space where women could seek support and reclaim their lives. From her work establishing the original Women's Center to her career in psychology, her commitment to helping others find their strength remains at the heart of CEE’s mission.

“My Mom, Bonnie Ellen Law, was intelligent, determined, and extremely compassionate. Her joy came from helping others,” shared Laurie Mix, Bonnie’s daughter.

Bonnie’s impact is still felt today, and CEE is proud to celebrate her legacy during the 50th Anniversary celebrations. By coincidence, April 11th also happens to be Bonnie’s birthday!

Continuing the Mission: From 50 to the Future

As CEE celebrates five decades of impact, the organization remains committed to the vision set forth by its founders: a future where individuals are free from violence, discrimination, and oppression. The Annual Dinner will not only reflect on the achievements of the past but will also shine a light on those shaping the present and future of CEE.

Join in celebrating CEE’s 50th anniversary at their Annual Dinner on April 11, 2025, at the Amber Room Colonnade. This event is an integral part of CEE’s organizational fundraising plan. All contributions are greatly appreciated. For sponsorship, tickets and/or event advertising space, please contact Linda Cummins, Special Events Manager at (475) 290-3398 or lind.c@thecenterct.org.

About The Center for Empowerment and Education

Since founding in 1975, The Center for Empowerment and Education (CEE), formerly The Women’s Center of Greater Danbury, has been a safe haven as the sole provider of services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in the Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield County areas. Each year, CEE serves over 22,000 individuals from area communities with confidential services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and provided at no cost.

CEE provides support services in the form of crisis intervention and advocacy, counseling, and emergency shelter. Their advocates empower individuals to find their voice and choose their path toward healing as they rebuild their lives. CEE prevents and reduces interpersonal violence in the community through prevention education and awareness. CEE is reducing trauma by stopping violence from manifesting in the first place. CEE believes that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

All funds provided to CEE support their critically needed domestic violence, sexual assault, and resource services for adults and children in an 11-town service area, including: Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, and Sherman. CEE is a member of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) and The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

NOTE TO MEDIA: For further comment, please reach out to Ashley Dunn, CEO of The Center for Empowerment and Education, contact her at ashley.d@thecenterct.org

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