

Women Of Distinction Show Why They Earned The Title

TOMS RIVER TIMES

Fundraiser Benefits Caregivers Organization, Honors Women In Community

By Judy Smestad-Nunn



TOMS RIVER – Three women from Toms River were named Women of Distinction at an annual Fashion Show and Gift Auction on Wednesday night, benefiting Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey.

Held at the Woodlake Country Club, it is one of three main fundraisers for the volunteer organization, and the event honors women who have made a difference in their community.

The interfaith agency provides supportive home care services to the elderly and homebound through the efforts of volunteers.

The star-studded evening began with Fox anchorwoman SallyAnn Mosey welcoming the 350 attendees.

“Caregiver Volunteers help families fill in those all-too-important gaps, like going to the grocery store or taking seniors to doctor’s appointments,” she said.

Mosey then spoke poignantly about her mother-in-law, who died of Alzheimer’s at the age of 65, before handing over the microphone to the master of ceremonies for the evening, News 12 New Jersey anchor Janine Strafaci.

The Emmy-winning Strafaci told the crowd, “It’s organizations like this that really make a difference in people’s lives,” before introducing the Women of Distinction.

The 10 women who were being honored modeled clothes from tula “the Boutique” from The Grove West in Shrewsbury, and from Macy’s Department Store.

Toms River police officers and volunteer firefighters escorted the women as they modeled the clothes for the crowd.

The \$35 ticket price included five tickets to a gift auction, door prizes and a coffee/dessert buffet. There were over 60 gifts and

gift baskets, which were all donated by local businesses.

Woman of distinction Terry Moser is a well-known resident of Toms River. Diagnosed with breast cancer in November of 2007, Moser has since raised about \$50,000 for Sloan Kettering, mostly through Moser's Miles 5K Breast Cancer Walk.

Lynette Whiteman, executive director of Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey, said that even when Moser was fighting cancer, she volunteered for Caregivers.

"She is a great volunteer for us despite all her personal challenges. In the midst of one of her treatments, she'd say, 'When I'm finished, I would like to shop for someone.' She's remarkable and very deserving of the honor," Whiteman said. "You don't have to put this in the paper," Moser said, "but A&P supermarkets just voted me Survivor of the Year, and donated \$10,000 to Sloan-Kettering.

"I think this organization is wonderful. I have a sick father, and there was no help for him except for family. I shop for my friend Julie, who is 91. I feel good about helping her," she said.

Moser, who owns Tender Touch, which offers occupational therapy for special needs children, finished her cancer treatments last year and is cancer-free.

Beverly Prima is relatively new to Caregivers, Whiteman said. "She is really impressed by our mission and wants to get more involved. She reached out to the community on our behalf and sold many tickets."

Prima is the sales and marketing director for her husband's home-building business, Prima Corporation, and said that the company supports the organization.

"I'm involved with Caregivers because I belong to Holy Cross Lutheran Church, and the congregation there does outreach," she said. As a youth guide at the church, Prima said she encourages the youth to participate in Caregivers and help with the elderly.

"They have become aware of (the needs of) the elderly. Many of our older members have been volunteers," Prima said.

Township resident Jane Kunka has volunteered for Caregivers for about two years, and Whiteman said that Kunka puts in a lot of hours with the organization.

"She volunteers at the holiday parties, and she works with the therapy dogs, was on the fashion show committee and reaches out to the community on our behalf. She is very supportive of our agency," Whiteman said.

Kunka is the public affairs manager for United Water, Toms River and described how she got involved with Caregivers.

"I was a caregiver for both of my late parents; that's how I latched on to Caregivers. Through one of our board members, I met a board member (of Caregivers), and the rest is history," Kunka said.

"One of our first partnerships was last Christmas, when my boss, Rich Pfeleiderer, and I handed out 150 gifts at a nursing home. It was a great experience; many of the residents have no one...The looks on their faces and the look on my boss's face was the perfect holiday gift in the spirit of community service," she said.

Whiteman said that the evening was very successful and the agency is very happy with the amount of funds that were raised.

“Also, more people know about our mission and might want to get involved with us as volunteers and/or business sponsors in the future,” she said.

Caregivers has over 1,000 volunteers that help over 2,000 senior citizens every month.

In addition to the Women of Distinction Fashion Show and Gift Auction, the agency has two additional major fundraisers each year. The Annual Awards Gala will be held at The View Restaurant at Eagle Ridge in October, and a golf outing is held at the Eagle Ridge Golf Course in May.

For more information, call 732-505-2273, or visit www.caregivervolunteers.org.

Also honored as Women of Distinction were Charlotte Aylor-Diaz of Johnson and Johnson; Della Crews of News 12 New Jersey; Dianne DeOliveira of Breeze Radio; Dawn Marzarella of All County Enterprises; Sarah Reed of Women of Purpose Ministries, Inc.; Alicia Vitarelli of News 12 New Jersey; and Sharon Waters of NJBIZ.