

NEWS

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Contact: Sue Murphy – (860) 638-2959
or smurphy@liberty-bank.com



LIBERTY BANK PRESENTS LOCAL YOUTH WITH AWARDS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

MIDDLETOWN, CT — **Emma Carpenter** of Plainville and **Luke Hajdasz** of Colchester were honored yesterday as the recipients of the **2013 Liberty Bank Youth In Action Awards**. The awards were presented at a reception at Middlesex Community College that was attended by 100 award nominees, family, friends, and bank officials.

Established in 2011, Liberty's Youth In Action Awards are designed to recognize middle and high school students within the bank's market area who have distinguished themselves through volunteering, fundraising, and advocating for nonprofit organizations. Carpenter and Hajdasz were selected from over 30 candidates for the award who were nominated by schools and youth organizations in their communities. Each was able to direct a \$1,000 donation from Liberty Bank to a nonprofit organization of their choice.

Liberty Bank President and CEO

Chandler Howard hailed all the award nominees

for their community service, saying, "You've proven to us that it doesn't matter how young you are—you can make a difference. All it takes is the first step: collecting one can of food...spending one morning working at a car wash...walking in a walkathon. And you know—as I do, because I volunteer myself—once you've discovered how great it feels to volunteer, you're hooked for life. That's an addiction we can all be proud of!"

Emma Carpenter, the high school Youth In Action Award recipient, was lauded for spending over 500 hours working with the "Out in the Cold Soup Kitchen" in New Britain, the New Britain Triad Senior Center, Monsignor Bojonowski Manor skilled nursing facility, and St. Maurice Church. Carpenter is a member of the Principal's Council at Plainville High School and the founder and president of Interact, the



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high school arm of the Rotary Club. Through Interact and the Principal's Council, Carpenter was involved in raising over \$2500, which went to Japan Relief, the National Kidney Foundation, CCMC Foundation, local food pantries and the Animal Shelter. A highlight in her volunteer experience was working in Honduras with two other Plainville Interact students for a week in October 2012. During this trip, she worked under difficult and challenging conditions to help build bathroom facilities and deliver and install a water filtration system. In addition to her exceptional volunteerism, Carpenter is a top student, an athlete, a talented musician and an actress in school plays. Carpenter chosen to split her \$1,000 donation from Liberty Bank between The Salvation Army of New Britain and Pure Water for the World – Honduras.

Plainville High School Principal Steven LePage, who nominated Carpenter for the award, told of how he had called upon Carpenter for help with the emergency shelter that was set up at the school during Winter Storm Alfred. He said, "Within ten minutes, Emma called back to assure me that she would be there, with about ten others. The remarkable thing is not just that she volunteered for ten hours that day, and several days after, but that she volunteered for ten hours on her sixteenth birthday!"

Middle school award recipient Luke Hajdasz has brightened the day for many senior citizens at the Colchester Senior Center for the past three years. Every Thursday in the summer, Hajdasz plays Wii bowling with the seniors, sets up the game, organizes friendly competitions and teaches new seniors how to bowl. He also helps with the annual fundraising Holiday Bazaar by selling food and raffle tickets and is in charge of the money box. Hajdasz attends seniors' birthday parties and field trips, and assists those who have difficulty with mobility. When seniors are ill or hospitalized, Luke visits them and calls them on the phone.

"What started as a Wii game has developed into a deep, sincere interest in seniors' well-being," said teacher Janet Lord, who nominated Hajdasz for the award. "For many of the seniors, their families are all gone. Luke fills a need for family and provides companionship. When he leaves the senior center, all of the seniors line up so he can give them a hug. For many, that hug is the only physical contact they have with another human being."

Hajdasz is an honors student at William J. Johnston Middle School and goes to Bacon Academy for algebra. He directed the \$1,000 donation from Liberty Bank to the Colchester Senior Center.

In addition to the two award recipients, six regional finalists for the award were recognized. Each was able to donate \$100 to a nonprofit of their choice.

Middle School:

Abigail Casey, Groton -
Taylor Costick, Norwich

High School:

Natalie Anderson, Waterford
Amar Batra, Mystic
Victoria Farrell, Wallingford
Gabrielle Tudisca, Bozrah

Liberty Bank President and CEO Chandler J. Howard, himself a longtime volunteer with many awards for community service, praised the award winners, finalists, and nominees, saying, "This is a whole roomful of shining stars. As young as you are, you've learned something very important: that

everyone has something to give, no matter how small it is. And when everyone gives their little something, it adds up to something BIG. It's called 'community'...and it only works when we all give something to it."

Established in 1825, Liberty Bank is Connecticut's oldest mutual bank, with more than \$3.5 billion in assets and 44 banking offices throughout the central, eastern, and shoreline areas of the state. As a full-service financial institution, Liberty offers consumer and commercial banking, home mortgages, insurance, and investment services. Rated outstanding by federal regulators on its community reinvestment efforts, Liberty maintains a longstanding commitment to superior personal service and unparalleled community involvement.

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