



1 Volunteers Kari Sweeney, Linda Wilson, Melinda Zupaniotis, Rebecca Craig, Carol Foley and Rebecca Judelson with WABC-TV meteorologist Bill Evans
2 Tom and Donna Ormond **3** Nancy and Richard Freedman
4 Nagi Osta's family cheering for their favorite dancer



Dance the Night Away

The sixth annual Dancing With The Stars competition, celebrated at Palace Theatre, and the cocktail reception at Stamford branch of UConn that preceded it, raised more than \$135,000 for Curtain Call.

Nicole Faugno from Noble Salon, partnered with professional dancer David Thomas Moore of Dance With Me; and Dr. Nolan Zeide of Bull's Head Pet Hospital, who danced with professional dancer Meredith Landphair, also of Dance With Me, were awarded Judges Choice Awards for their routines. Nagi Osta, owner of Nagi Jewelers, received the People's Choice Award for raising the most money for the theater company. Osta danced with Rosa Fanelli of Arthur Murray Grande Ballroom of Greenwich. Also recognized for her fundraising was Nancy Freedman, producer of Stamford Public Schools' All School Musical. Freedman was partnered with professional dancer Moises Guerrero of Arthur Murray Grande Ballroom. »

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Linda McMahon of World Wedding Entertainment.



Nancy Gault, William Gault, Jim Donaher and Ginger Donaher of Gault Energy & Stone.



Jerry Nielsen, Sandy Nielsen Baumann, Karen Kuehler and Tami Whittier of Nielsen's Florist.



Babe Rizzuto of Conair.



Angela Rountos, Christopher Rountos, James Rountos and Shannon Rountos of Windmill Diner & Restaurant.



Liz Osta, Sary Lulaj and Nagi Osta of Nagi Jewelers.



Jan Unger of Unger Enterprises.

Family-owned, forward-thinking

WORK-HOME RELATIONS THRIVE; SIX COMPANIES STAND TALL

BY BILL FALLON

bfallon@westfairinc.com

The full passion and scope of family-owned businesses – from restaurateurs to jewelers to auto dealers – stood to be recognized recently at the 2013 Family-Owned Business Awards, sponsored by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), the Business Journal and its sister publication, WAG magazine, and hosted by event co-sponsor Arthur Murray Grande Ballroom in Greenwich.

The six winners from among 24 Fairfield County finalists were Conair Corp., Gault Energy & Stone, Nagi Jewelers, Nielsen's Florist, Unger Enterprises and Windmill Diner & Restaurant.

They were chosen by a panel of judges that included CBIA economist and Vice President Peter M. Gioia; Lovins Group Family Business Consulting Center principal and licensed marriage and family therapist Donald P. Opatrny; Santa Energy former CEO and Vice Chairman John S. Santa; and workplace attorney and HR counsel for CBIA Mark Soycher. (Profiles of all nominees and judges appeared in the Oct. 7 FCBJ.)

An anecdote from William Gault, with his wife, Nancy, standing beside him, set the evening's tone.

"I started out helping, driving in the fields, when I was 14," said Gault, a fourth-generation Gault family member and father to Sam Gault, the fifth-generation president of Westport-based Gault Energy & Stone. "I think from age 5 I knew what I was going to be doing." Asked if he had made the right choice as a small boy, the 79-year-old Gault replied, "Absolutely."

The event drew 125 to the event co-sponsor Arthur Murray Grande Ballroom in Greenwich.

The keynote speaker was former U.S. Senate candidate and World Wrestling Entertainment CEO Linda McMahon. With a nod to the dysfunction in Washington, D.C., Business Journal publisher Dee DelBello introduced her by saying, "If Linda were in Washington right now, things might be different." DelBello also noted 78 percent of jobs created in the U.S. are created by family-owned enterprises and 35 percent of the Fortune 500 companies are family-owned or family controlled.

McMahon appeared a study in poise

and success, yet the backstory she shared was of bankruptcy and disappointment. "Our home was auctioned; our car was repossessed," she said. After battling back, helping to build a 700-employee, publicly traded company – WWE – and mounting a pair of U.S. Senate bids, she said, "You build a family business with heart and mind; it's a very special treasure."

The pride family members place in their businesses was the event undercurrent and McMahon embraced it, citing the massive banner that flies beside the Stars and Stripes at WWE headquarters in Stamford. "The WWE flag – you can't miss it," she said. "When you see that emblem, it's like the McMahon family crest; it's blood, sweat and tears."

McMahon cited a number of foibles unique to family-owned enterprises, including the personal: her husband, Vince, addressing her during a board meeting with, "So, baby ..." and witnessing the warm relationship between her then 3-year-old daughter, Stephanie, and Andre the Giant, all 7'4" of him. "When he picked her up it was like something from 'Gulliver's Travels,'" she said.

Gioia spoke to a new set of family-owned business data (see separate story, page 8) and took the assembled behind the scenes of the judging process, saying, "This was a really tough job; everybody looked great."

Soycher, another judge, said "Family ties lead to some of the greatest successes in business and to some of the greatest losses." He has seen family businesses flaunt their ties and other family businesses hide them. One commonality, however, is the sense they are "embedded in the community," he said. He called the nominees "a rich array of companies."

Opatrny, also a judge, concurred, saying, "Choosing the best was an impossible task, a flawed task. We live in a messy process." Donning his counseling hat, he said it required heroic efforts to navigate family and business responsibilities.

"These are real families facing real challenges," he said. He addressed directly the family-themed audience and said, "Without you we really don't have a country."

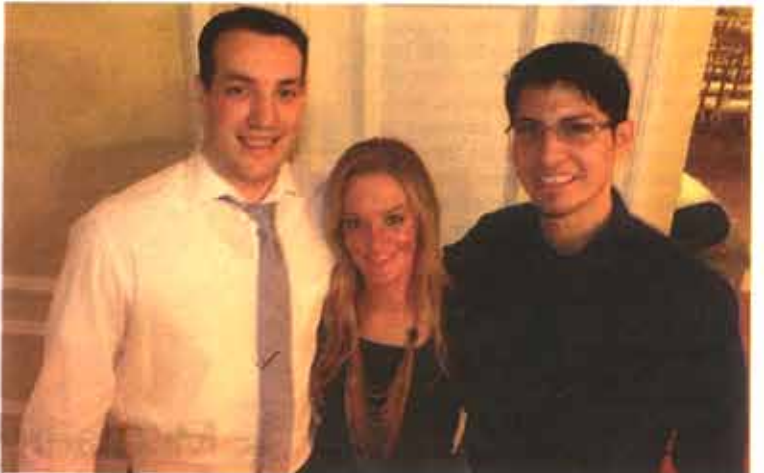
Callari Auto Group joined Arthur Murray as a sponsor. Deutsch Family Wines & Spirits in White Plains, N.Y., a recognized event supporter, provided wine and Heineken USA the beer.



Chista Pooya and Maria Pooya



Showcase of vehicles on Lewis Street, compliments of Callari Auto Group, an event sponsor. Callari operates BMW of Darien, Volvo of Westport, Mini and Fiat of Fairfield County.



Tom Varian, Kelly Butler and Moises Guerrero of Arthur Murray Grande Ballroom of Greenwich owned by Christine Georgopoulos.



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