



Malta House of Care Clinic *Greater Hartford*

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Five Extraordinary Connecticut Women to be Honored at Malta's Celebrating Wonder Women '24 Event

Deb Bibbins, Cate Grady-Benson, Abby Sullivan Moore, Gladys Rivera, and Jessica Zachs to be Honored as Malta House of Care's Wonder Women Class of 2024 on May 16, 2024 at The Bushnell

[Hartford, CT] — [March 6, 2024] Malta House of Care is thrilled to announce its 12th class of Wonder Women: **Deb Bibbins, Cate Grady-Benson, Abby Sullivan Moore, Gladys Rivera, and Jessica Zachs**. These five extraordinary Connecticut women make a significant impact to the Greater Hartford community and will be honored at **Celebrating Wonder Women 2024** on Thursday, May 16, 2024 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm at The Bushnell in Hartford. Since 2011, Malta House of Care has hosted the "Celebrating Wonder Women" awards ceremony and fundraiser for two reasons: to honor extraordinary Connecticut women who make outstanding contributions and

positively influenced their communities in extraordinary ways, and to support the Malta House of Care, which provides free primary health care to uninsured adults in Greater Hartford. This year's class joins an exclusive group of 81 local women who have received this special honor since the organization's first class in 2011.

This year's remarkable Wonder Women cohort is a testament to the diverse and impactful leadership shaping our community. Among them is a pioneering founder and CEO dedicated to connecting generations, a steadfast executive director preserving our natural heritage, a compassionate leader addressing homelessness, an advocate for public service and community empowerment, and a philanthropist committed to fostering dignity and growth. The collective impact of these five exceptional women extends far and wide, leaving an indelible mark on our community today and promising a brighter future.

Deb Bibbins, JD, MBA, a visionary leader and founder of For All Ages, has dedicated her life's work to combatting the pervasive issue of loneliness and fostering meaningful connections across generations and cultures. Since the organization's founding in 2019, Deb has spearheaded several successful and innovative programs such as Tea @ 3, a friendship community that pairs older adults with college students for weekly calls as well as large community events like the Unite by Light luminary event that has united thousands of community members of all ages as volunteers and spectators for a night of connection and joy. Her dedication to reducing loneliness to positively impact people's physical and mental health extends to speaking engagements across the country on the importance of social health and convening leaders across the state for The CT Collaborative to End Loneliness, a statewide, multi-sector alliance to foster social connection in Connecticut. Deb stands as a compassionate advocate connecting

people across generations, combating loneliness, and fostering a sense of community. In her own words, “My passion is weaving community and my greatest joy comes from fostering meaningful connections between people across generations and cultures. When we unite for a common purpose, we see each other in a more positive light and learn that we are all more alike than different.”

Cate Grady-Benson, the dynamic Executive Director for the Farmington Land Trust, is a shining example of unwavering dedication and effective leadership. With a background in nursing and a strong advocacy for women and families, Cate's commitment to community service spans over two decades. Her extensive volunteer work for numerous charities in the greater Hartford area showcases her passion for making a positive impact. As described by her nominator, “Cate is the kind of person everyone desires on their Board of Directors because she shows up and makes things happen. Her contagious enthusiasm draws people in, fostering collaboration to achieve meaningful goals for the community.” In her current role, Cate launched a capital campaign to fund the restoration of a circa 1800 farm to create the Farmington Land Trust, Wilcox Bushley Homestead Environmental Learning Center. The Center, located in Unionville CT, will offer the Greater Hartford community a place to learn more about nature and the important role preserving open space plays in the mitigation of climate change. Cate seamlessly integrates her leadership skills with genuine compassion, leaving a lasting and positive imprint on the community she serves. She notes, “Working with area schools has allowed me to experience the desire and passion of our youth to know more about their environment and help to find solutions to our climate crisis.”

Abby Sullivan Moore, the passionate Founder and Leader of Footwear With Care, has transformed her successful writing career into a powerful force for social change. Since

2016, Abby has spearheaded this nonprofit, providing essential support, including shoes, medical foot exams, and health services, to Hartford's homeless. Inspired by the compassionate actions of Hartford Police Officer Jimmy Barrett and fueled by the awareness of the significant lack of decent footwear and regular foot care for the homeless, Abby sprang into action. Her remarkable initiative and unwavering passion has led to organizing numerous events and consistently providing aid to over 1,000 individuals each year. She describes the connection with those her nonprofit serves, "With their new boots or sneakers, they walk a little taller. So, do I. I am grateful to be part of the entire process." Abby stands as an inspiring advocate, demonstrating that individual passions can create profound and positive change.

Gladys Rivera embodies the spirit of community service working diligently to ensure that the Latino and Puerto Rican community is educated on the importance and impact of voting and civic engagement. She helps empower women, children, and seniors while collaborating with legislators and local leaders to address the economic development, education, health, and political inequities within our community. She made significant contributions through her service on the CICD Puerto Rican Parade of Hartford Board for over 30 years. Her commitment to public service, community advocacy, and education has garnered her numerous recognitions, including the Latinas in Power Community Warrior Award. Selected as one of the Frog Hollow Hero's, a mural in her honor stands proudly at the corner of Park and Cedar Streets in Hartford. In her own words, "I have always been a strong advocate for community change and proudly promote the preservation of our Puerto Rican culture by fostering leadership and celebrating our traditions." She has also worked on the Relief Center for Our Caribbean Friends, where she volunteered to serve thousands displaced by hurricane Maria in

2017. Gladys currently works as the Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director of CREC.

Jessica Zachs, the Chair and CEO of Dignity Grows, stands out as a dedicated philanthropist committed to nurturing dignity and health equity for women who cannot afford monthly menstrual hygiene necessities, resulting in chronic school absenteeism, job instability and health issues. Recognizing the profound effects of Period Poverty, Jessica swiftly took action in 2019, educating and motivating volunteers to make a change for women and girls in the Hartford community. Within 18 months, her efforts gained national attention, leading to the establishment of Dignity Grows chapters in cities across the nation. Jessica's visionary leadership not only involves directly providing crucial hygiene support for hundreds of thousands of Americans but also recognizing the need for her organization to play a pivotal role in advocating for policy and systemic change at the national level. Her passionate force for change leaves a lasting and meaningful impact on the lives of individuals and communities. In her own words, "Having lived in the Greater Hartford community for over 30 years, I have been involved with many organizations. Nothing has personally impacted me in the way learning about Period Poverty and hygiene inequity has. Meeting neighbors from across the Hartford region and sharing the work of Dignity Grows has been life-changing for me."

The Wonder Women Awards highlight the outstanding achievements of these women, showcasing their unwavering commitment to creating positive change in the community.

For more information on Malta House of Care and the Wonder Women Awards, please visit maltahouseofcare.org

Find more about Celebrating Wonder Women Online:

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About Malta House of Care

The Malta House of Care's mission is to mobilize volunteers, partners, and donors to improve the overall health and well-being of uninsured adults in Greater Hartford by providing free primary care health services. Our clinics provide high quality, comprehensive, culturally competent primary medical services to uninsured adults at no cost to the patient to alleviate the striking healthcare disparities in the Greater Hartford region. Malta has had over 77,000 patient visits since it first opened its doors as a mobile medical clinic helping the community with its specialized 40-foot van traveling to

neighborhoods in Greater Hartford. In 2022, Malta opened a state-of-the-art stationary medical clinic in the Asylum Hill neighborhood in Hartford. This incredible feat has allowed Malta the opportunity to increase its reach to more neighborhoods by having the mobile van available to visit more locations. Malta relies 100% on revenues generated by philanthropy. The good work of Malta is made possible by our amazing staff and an incredible corps of volunteer doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals who contribute about 1,000 hours of free medical care each year, as well as thousands of generous financial supporters. Malta provides no cost primary care for over 1,800 uninsured adults, approximately 90% of whom have one or more chronic diseases.

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