

TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Amy Watt Recognized as a ‘Hidden Hero’

Wins Top Award from Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association

(VERNON, Connecticut) – Vernon Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Amy Watt was honored Tuesday by the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association with its “2021 Hidden Hero Award.”



Amy Watt

Watt was recognized for her work overseeing a variety of wildly successful and popular recreation programs during the pandemic, including last year’s reimagined *Winterfest* and a COVID-safe *Trunk-or-Treat* program. She was also recognized for the critical role she played managing Vernon’s nationally recognized COVID-19 vaccination program. Watt and Parks and Recreation Director Marty Sitler oversaw non-medical operations of the program.

When the vaccination program transitioned from mega-clinics at the Vernon Senior Center to smaller clinics focused on serving hard-to-reach communities, including people experiencing homelessness, food insecurity and other challenges, Watt took a leadership role. In partnership with the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, she also led a series of highly-specialized clinics custom tailored to people living with disabilities.

“Amy is highly deserving of this award, which recognizes the incredible work she has done on behalf of the residents of Vernon and beyond,” Mayor Dan Champagne. “Amy is a great example of how our staff came together, outside of their regular roles, and did a phenomenal job meeting the needs of our community.”

Last year’s *Winterfest* was a huge success because it provided a much-needed diversion for a community that had been dealing with the pandemic and the isolation it caused, Town Administrator Michael Purcaro said.

“Under Amy’s leadership, our Parks and Recreation Department created a program that delighted thousands of pandemic-fatigued families and quite literally backed up traffic to I-84,” Purcaro said. “That was an important event for our community and the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive. As important as Amy’s work on Winterfest was, her role in leading our vaccination program was even more consequential. Amy and her team literally saved lives.”

“This was a big job and it was going to take both of us to do it well,” Sitler said. “Amy knows her job and is good at adapting when there are challenges. She brought that to the vaccination program. She quickly figured out what needed to be done, and then adjusted and improved as we moved forward. It was always about doing our best to serve residents.”

Watt said she was honored to be recognized by her colleagues, but stressed that she could not have achieved anything without the hard work of her colleagues in Vernon. “Without the leadership of the mayor and town administrator, the commitment of the people with whom I work, and the loving support of my family, this could not have happened,” Watt said. “I was fortunate to have the opportunity to lead this tremendous team.”

And while the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, Watt said she has come to appreciate the opportunities it presented to serve.

“It was especially rewarding to help people with disabilities receive vaccine,” she said. “Some were not able to speak, but the expression on their faces and the gratitude and relief expressed by their loved ones and caregivers really drove home how important our work was to so many people. It was a gift to be able to help so many people.”

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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