



a giving

Community events support local non-profits

By *Cris Cadiz*

Charitable giving can be much more than just a tax write-off. While philanthropy is usually meaningful to people, many are inspired by a “hands-on” way to support a favorite cause—such as making an event-related donation. Giving can be satisfying, inspiring and fun by participating in a community effort such as an auction, a gala, a festival, or an outdoor adventure.

Danielson resident Serena Dupuis has headed down to Eastern Point Beach in Groton for the past three years in mid-February to immerse her body in the freezing ocean for Mystic Aquarium’s Seal Splash — a program that supports its Animal Rescue Program. An avid animal lover, she says, “I do it with a group of friends and I

love to feel the energy. The people who sponsor and donate their time at the event are always so nice and make sure the event is fun!”

If you want to be actively involved, you can also run a 5K for dozens of different causes pretty much any day from spring through fall. Charity cycling events are also becoming popular (BikeReg.com is a good source to find events) and golf tournaments abound throughout the state. Hartford Marathon (www.hartfordmarathon.com) is a great resource and supporter of charity runs and multi-sport events. Some race events they produce directly support specific charities. The popular Mystic Half Marathon and 10K held in May has generated more than \$100,000 since 2015 to ben-



experience

efit the charitable works of the Mystic Rotary Club. The Norwich Winterfest 5K, a festive holiday event, benefits Reliance Health, Inc., a non-profit community mental health center.

The Hartford Marathon Foundation (HMF) encourages race participants at all of their events to "run for good" by raising money for their own favorite cause. According to the HMF website, "each year, charities associated with HMF events raise more than \$500,000 through our runs." The best part about charity races is the goal for most participants is to have fun and raise money to support a cause, not to win the race. People of all physical abilities are encouraged to participate, and it's a great way to set personal goals for physical health.

There are also many popular walking events that benefit national organizations, such as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, which

has well-established events throughout eastern Connecticut. The Relay for Life of Northeastern Connecticut held at the Brooklyn Fairgrounds

FAR LEFT: Team "Rescue" at Mystic Aquarium's Seal Splash event. *Photo by Allie Dearie Photography*

LEFT: The Sassy Chapeau Hat Show. *Submitted photo*

BELOW: American Cancer Society's 2019 Relay for Life at Brooklyn Fairgrounds. *Photo by Kaitlyn French*





ABOVE: Hearty supporters of Mystic Aquarium's Animal Rescue Program run into the frigid Long Island Sound at the annual Seal Splash event. *Photo by Allie Deorie Photography*

BELOW: American Cancer Society's 2019 Relay for Life at Brooklyn Fairgrounds. *Photo by Kaitlyn French*

RIGHT: The Sassy Chapeau Hat Show. *Submitted photo*



raised approximately \$123,000 in 2019 and regularly has more than 400 participants, according to Amber Dunphy, Community Development Manager.

Many grassroots fundraising events might be smaller in size but in no way less powerful in supporting their communities. Regional nonprofits in northeast Connecticut host many creative and fun occasions that directly support local people and organizations. The Sassy Chapeau Hat Show is one such unique happening. This annual soiree & runway show showcases hats furnished by the Salmagundi Hat Shop in Boston. Runway models change annually; last year they were area first responders and the 2020 event will feature women business owners. The event usually raises about \$10,000, with about 200 in attendance in 2019. Hosted by the NECT Women & Girls Fund & the Community Foundation of Eastern CT, funds raised help build an endowment to support local women, girls, and families with grants to local nonprofits.

Wherever your charitable sentiments lie, consider making your contribution a fun and memorable experience. You will be invested and enthusiastic, and your favorite cause will be the better for it. 🎩



A few more events to consider. Dates listed are the original dates but early summer events are likely to be rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Check with the organization for up-to-date information.

Taste of Mystic

Olde Mistick Village, Mystic: June 12-14. Local restaurants offer tastings, beverages, and live entertainment. Part of proceeds donated annually to different charities. The 2020 event will benefit the Easterseals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut and Veterans Rally Point.

thisismystic.com/event/taste-of-mystic-2020/

American Cancer Society's Relay for Life

Southeastern Connecticut in Norwich on June 13 and Greater Windham County in Mansfield Center on Oct. 17. relay.acsevents.org/; Northeastern Connecticut in Brooklyn, date TBD. relayforlife.org/northeasternct

Owl Garden Party

Connecticut Audubon Center at Pomfret: June 18. Annual fundraiser where proceeds support environmental education programming for all ages and includes tastings of beverages and food from local restaurants and farms. It has raised more than \$400,000 over the last 20 years.

ctaudubon.org/pomfret-home

The Sassy Chapeau Hat Show

Aug. 5, at Stonehurst at Hampton Valley in Hampton.

SassyChapeau.com

Walk and Race for the NECT Cancer Fund

Aug. 8, Day Kimball Hospital, Putnam. This popular 5-mile road race has raised more than \$1.2 million in the past 25 years. All the money remains local to benefit those fighting cancer in Northeast Connecticut. DKH Women's Board also hosts a number of charitable events.

daykimball.org/events/annual-fundraising-events/

Steeplechase Bike Tour

Mansfield: Aug. 15. Starts at Eastern Connecticut State University. All support three critical Windham County social service agencies. This event has raised more than \$1 million in 25 years. Five different scenic rides from 20 to 100 miles with rest stops at local churches or a 5-mile walk. steeplechasebiketour.org/

Tastes of the Valley

The Publick House, Sturbridge, Mass.: Aug. 23. The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor's annual farm-to-table dinner/fundraiser with auction. Showcases local farms, orchards and restaurants of 35-town region in northeast Connecticut and south-central Massachusetts. tlgv.org

Over the Edge

Mohegan Sun, Uncasville: Sept. 4. Rappel more than 30 stories down the Sky Tower to raise money for Special Olympics athletes. Not for the faint of heart, but a truly thrilling experience with amazing views.

soct.org/ways-give/over-edge/

Ocean Commotion Gala

Mystic Aquarium, Mystic: Sept. 26. Annual black-tie affair that supports the Aquarium's mission "to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education and research." Also see Seals on The Rocks (cocktail party) on July 31 and Run/Walk for Penguins 5K on Oct. 17. mysticaquarium.org/events/

