



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**  
OF THE LOWER NAUGATUCK VALLEY

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**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB NAMES FRAN & GARY SCARPA  
2009 RAYMOND P. LAVIETES AWARD WINNERS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Shelton, CT, March 20, 2009** – The Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley has named Francesca & Gary Scarpa as the winners of its 2009 Raymond P. Lavietes Award. The award will be presented at the Service to Youth Dinner on April 7<sup>th</sup> at John J. Sullivan's.

Arlene Clancy, chairman of the selection committee, said "Fran and Gary were unanimous choices. They have done so much for our community. They bring professional quality theatre and culture to our community and help so many children."

Committee member Ken Nappi stated, "Not all children are athletes and sometimes, especially in today's society, we place too much emphasis on hitting or throwing a baseball or shooting a basketball. Gary and Fran have provided an alternative to athletics, where our children can still gain a tremendous sense of accomplishment."

"Gary was a member of the Club in his youth," said Executive Director Jack Ribas. "Even back then he was entertaining us. He played in a band for our teen dances and was extremely popular even back then!"

In addition to running Center Stage and directing so many wonderful plays, Gary and Fran have been involved in choreography, as well as many activities which include the All American presentation which the Valley won in 2000. Fran worked diligently on the "Big Read" and put together a tremendous program for our children. They have worked on Relay for Life and helped raise thousands of dollars over the years.

Fran and Gary have dedicated themselves to teaching educational theatre for more than 30 years, directing more than 100 major musicals and plays with high school students, college students, elementary school students, and adults. They are the founders of the highly successful Youth CONNecTion Players, a community theater group for high school and college students; the Youth CONNecTion Summer Theatre Camp for elementary school students; and Center Stage, a non-profit theatre in downtown Shelton which will enter its fifth season in June of 2009.

In 1983, after directing the Shelton High School Drama Club for almost a decade, the couple decided to start a community theatre group for high school and college students. With the help of former Shelton Mayor Eugene Hope, the Scarpas were granted permission to use the then-vacant Huntington School, where they mounted the Youth CONNecTion's first production, *West Side Story*, which played to nine sell-out audiences.



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In the summer of 1984, the Youth CONNection performed their second production, *Bye Bye Birdie* at Shelton High School's Percy Kingsley Auditorium, where they have resided ever since. Each summer, the group has performed such musicals as *Annie*, *Man of La Mancha*, *The Sound of Music*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Hello Dolly*, *The Music Man*, *The King and I*, *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon*, *South Pacific*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Godspell*, *Anything Goes*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Children of Eden*, and *Les Miserables* to name a few.

Members of the Youth CONNection and Youth CONNection kids have given benefit performances for civic organizations and worthy causes throughout the state, including Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, the Spirit of Life, the American Cancer Society, Hospice, the Ronald McDonald House, the Barnum Festival, and AIDS Project New Haven.

The Scarpas have been recognized for service to the community, having received the Silver Seal Award from the Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Millennium Award, given by the City of Shelton. Francesca Scarpa has been recognized by the American Committee on Italian Migration. Gary Scarpa has been recognized by Long Wharf Theatre as being an outstanding theatre educator as well as the Shelton Jaycees who named him Educator of the Year in 1989. They are honored to have been chosen to receive the Raymond P. Lavietes Service to Youth Award from the Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley.

Besides being the Artistic Directors of Center Stage and directing the Youth CONNection and the Shelton High School Drama Club, the couple have also directed for the Orange Players, the Amity High School Drama Club, the Sacred Heart Academy Drama Club, the Shubert Theatre Summer Academy for the Performing Arts, Quinnipiac University, and the Connecticut Experimental Theatre.

Gary and Fran have two daughters, Gina and Mia, who are active directors, teachers, and performers carrying on their parents' work with children and young adults at Center Stage, with the Youth CONNection, and with the Shelton High School Drama Club. They also have a wonderful grandson, Michael!

For further information on the Service to Youth Dinner or ticket information, please call Ann Wheeler at the Boys & Girls Club at 203-924-7462.

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