NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO TAKES HELM OF INTERVAL HOUSE

HARTFORD -- When Interval House's board of directors looked to replace the longtime director who retired last year, the group wanted someone to take the 40-year-old nonprofit into the future by increasing fundraising, expanding outreach and hit the ground running.

That's exactly who they got when they hired Mary-Jane Foster in December, said Board Chairman Garry Lapidus.

“We were looking for a great leader, who knows the domestic violence field, and has excellent business acumen,” Lapidus said. “As I have gotten to know and work with Mary-Jane, I’ve found her to have all those qualities and more. She’s focused, confident, transparent, passionate, positive and persistent and our board welcomes her arrival to work with our dedicated staff and our clients to further the mission of Interval House.”

In January, Foster, a Bridgeport businesswoman, lawyer and longtime community activist, started as Interval House’s new President and CEO. She relocated too, moving from Bridgeport to Hartford with her two Yorkshire Terriers: George and Otis.

“Being part of Interval House allows me to return to very special part of my early professional life,” Foster said. “Years ago I volunteered at a domestic violence program and that began my journey to help those trapped in this horrible cycle of violence.”

Foster has been an advocate for providing services to victims of domestic violence since 1989, the year she started as a volunteer with the YWCA of Bridgeport and later as a family law attorney. She was also instrumental in the founding of the Center for Family

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SAFE HOUSE RENOVATIONS PROJECT COMPLETE

HARTFORD — Managing and operating a confidentially located safe house and program for victims of domestic violence is an enormous job and responsibility.

But temporarily relocating that facility, renovating and then reoccupying the location -- all in less than four months -- is even more so.

That’s exactly what Interval House staff and a dedicated team of volunteers did in September, said Iris Ruiz, Interval House’s Assistant Director. Last year, the former director, Cecile Enrico, secured $296,000 in state bonding to renovate the shelter. It was the first major construction overhaul in more than 25 years. “It was really long overdue and we were very fortunate to get the state money to do this,” Ruiz said. “The temporary move itself was very challenging, but thanks to staff and volunteers we got it done on budget and on time.”

The project included completely gutting the common and kitchen areas, refurbishing the executive offices as well as gutting and completely renovating the residential rooms and laundry area.

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Justice in Bridgeport, the first family justice center in Connecticut. She has frequently advocated for increased funds and protections for victims of domestic violence in Connecticut’s state legislature.

Her impact at Interval House has already been significant, board member say. She’s secured a grant to upgrade Interval House’s aging and ailing computer systems, met with hundreds of area officials and residents to expand outreach and financial support, and co-hosted a reception with Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, Mrs. Cathy Malloy and Attorney Eric Daniels at the Governor’s mansion.

“I have known Mary-Jane Foster for many years, she is a tremendous leader and visionary with a long history of interest in domestic violence issues,” said US Senator Richard Blumenthal, a longtime friend and co-founder of Interval House’s Men Make a Difference, Men Against Domestic Violence Initiative.

“I am confident Interval House, its employees, volunteers and clients, will benefit from her guidance, energy and innovation,” Blumenthal said.

Foster’s business and community credentials are extensive. She is the former Vice President of University Relations at the University of Bridgeport, and co-founder and former co-owner and CEO of the Bridgeport Bluefish, a minor-league baseball team. She also co-developed the 5,500-seat Bluefish ballpark and was instrumental in the development of the nearby Webster Bank Arena.

“Interval House is already the premiere organization of its kind in Connecticut,” Foster said recently. “I want to take its extraordinary reputation nationally.”

But before the project could begin, Ruiz had to find a temporary location to house the residents and staff. Thankfully, a site in East Hartford was available.

Staff and volunteers cleaned and prepared the East Hartford location prior to moving. Various offices for the hotlines were set up as well as other offices. And all had to be done to make sure there were no interruption in services, Ruiz said. She said Interval House rented a truck and organized a team of staff and volunteers, including staff’s family members packed and move which included 21 beds and mattresses and laundry appliances.

“It wasn’t an easy task, but they worked together and made it another day in the life at Interval House,” Ruiz said. “They were all great sports throughout the entire process and Everyone cooperated ensuring a smooth transition.”

Congratulations to Cecile Enrico. Interval House’s 2016 Breakfast With Champions Honoree.
HARTFORD — Interval House’s annual Step Up & Step Out Gala at the Society Room in Hartford always provides gourmet food and wine, live music and great auction items. It’s regarded as one of the best philanthropic social events in Connecticut.

The May 13 black-tie event this year will be no different, except as it’s the 40th anniversary of the nonprofit agency, and organizers have a new way gala-goers can enjoy the night.

“Guests will be able to use their smart phones to make bids and track auction items,” said Hailey Boucher, Interval House’s Development Coordinator. “For those without phones we will have iPads and volunteers to help people make bids so everyone will be able to get in the action.”

The new auction system is thanks to 501 Auctions, a vendor Interval House is working with to maximize donations during the gala. They will help manage the silent and live auction, as well as the shelter appeal, said Mary-Jane Foster, Interval House’s President and CEO.

“This is just one way we are trying to think outside the box and enhance fundraising,” Foster said. “It will add a new element to the evening making technology part of the excitement.”

The gala is Interval House’s largest fundraising event of the year and usually generates more than $125,000 in donations and bids. It attracts more than 275 people including local television celebrities like Fox 61 Meteorologist Joe Furey, NBC-Connecticut News Anchor Brad Drazen and many others.

This year Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and First Lady Cathy Malloy are serving as the honorary chairs of the gala and will be attending.

Some auction items include gourmet wine packages, jewelry, and travel experiences, to name a few.

One week before the event, all the auction items will be available to see online, giving gala attendees a sneak peak, Foster said.

All the proceeds go to fund services at Interval House and programs that help thousands of area residents each year, mostly women and children.

To Purchase Ticket’s To The Gala click here or call: 860-246-9149, Ext 313.
Thank you...

- Donna Szarwak for 14 plus years of dedication to Interval House
- XL Catlin for choosing Interval House for the 7th year in a row for its annual Global Day of Giving
- Wethersfield United Methodist Church for its annual playground cleanup and Easter egg hunt
- St. Monica Episcopal Church for bringing in meals twice a month for the last three years
- Trinity College for its ongoing support during the holidays and throughout the year
- Junior League of Hartford
- Ashley Stone from Salon Alexander
- The Devika Family for bringing meals for residents
- Ginger Troy
- Tedone, Aetna, Cigna and Travelers.