



Hour photo / Alex von Kleydorff

Northrop Grumman's Norwalk facility on Friday presented its Community Grants checks to local organizations. Pictured, left to right: Tony Izzo, Northrop Grumman site director; Carla Conway and Harry Carey of the Norwalk Housing Authority; Amanda Teti of Homes for the Brave; Sgt. Lisa Cotto of the Norwalk Police Activities League; David Hay, Brookside School principal; Elisa Nelson, assistant principal at Fox Run School; and Lt. Susan Zecca of Norwalk Police Activities League.

Northrop Grumman doles out its annual community grants

By **CHRIS BOSAK**
HOUR STAFF WRITER

NORWALK — It is one of Tony Izzo's favorite days. It's the day he gets to play Santa Claus and give out Community Grant checks.

Izzo, the site director at Northrop Grumman's Norwalk facility, gave checks Friday to Norwalk Police Activities League, Homes for the Brave, Norwalk Housing Authority and three Norwalk public schools. Northrop Grumman gives the grants each year to organizations that apply and qualify.

"Leadership isn't just about what you're doing at work, but what you're doing in the community," Izzo said. "What are you doing to help other people? These grants give you a chance to move forward."

The checks were given to the recipients following a round-table discussion on how the funds would be used.

Chris Holms of the Norwalk Police Department said the money would help fund a "Police Explorers Post," whereby high

school-aged boys and girls can learn about law enforcement. The program, which Holms said will start in February, will feature advisers from the Norwalk Police Department and meet twice a month on Mondays.

"It's not just a club," Holms said. "You learn what it's like to be a cop. You learn how to handcuff people, how to pull drivers over. It's a junior cop program."

Participants will receive uniforms and duty belts. The group will meet late in the evening so as to not conflict with school, after-school programs or sports, Holms said. He expects to have at least 20 people in the group.

Holms said he did a similar program in Fairfield and wanted to start one in Norwalk when he joined the force.

"I did it for five years and I loved it. When I got to Norwalk I thought, why not have one here," he said. "There's a lot of interest in law enforcement."

Izzo was impressed by Holms' presentation.

"I think it's a great idea

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because it gives kids the opportunity to see what it's like to be a policeman," he said. "They can see if they want to be in the field."

Sgt. Lisa Cotto and Lt. Susan Zecca also represented the Norwalk Police Department at the gathering Friday. Cotto said she participated in a Police Explorers Post on Long Island.

"The idea is for the kids to take control and guide the topics toward their interests within police work," Zecca said.

The Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) will use the grant to help fund its college scholarship program.

"We have great kids and they know education is the way out of public housing," Harry Carey, an NHA board member, said.

Carla Conway, family outreach coordinator for NHA, shared several success stories of children who have utilized NHA

college scholarships.

"Several kids could not have afforded to go to the school they go to without Northrop Grumman's generosity," Conway said.

Izzo added: "It's great that people take the time to find these kids."

Homes for the Brave will utilize the funds for staff and staff support at its residential homes for homeless veterans. Amanda Teti of Homes for the Brave said its house in Bridgeport for women veterans opened recently after three years of searching, zoning challenges and getting the house ready. Its first resident moved in last month.

"It was an amazing feeling to get the house open after all the challenges we faced," she said.

In addition to housing, the organization also provides to veterans legal, vocational, parenting and budgeting services.

Three local schools —

West Rocks Middle School, Fox Run Elementary and Brookside Elementary — received checks to advance technology, science and math programs.

Assistant Principal Dr. Elisa Nelson represented Fox Run and Principal David Hay represented Brookside.

"When we went to school, the pencil was our technology," Hay said. "Now it's very different."

Hay also looked around the room and observed: "All this (grant money) is going to the future. It's a wonderful program for that reason alone."

The schools received grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$2,800. Homes for Braves received \$3,000 and has received \$15,000 over the past five years.

Norwalk Police Activities League received \$3,400 and Norwalk Housing Authority received \$3,500.