



**Chamber President, Paul Pedigrow presenting Matt with an award on behalf of the Chamber**

*On Wednesday, April 17, the West Orange Chamber of Commerce held its Annual Community Awards Dinner. Matt Served as Master of Ceremonies and was presented with an award recognizing his many contributions to the West Orange Chamber of Commerce and community. Matt has served on the the West Orange Chamber of Commerce for numerous years including terms as Board Chairman, President and Treasurer.*

**Article from The Alternative Press :**

## **West Orange Chamber of Commerce Honors Community Heroes**

**Cynthia Cumming**

**Thursday, April 18, 2013 • 11:40pm**

WEST ORANGE, NJ - The [West Orange Chamber of Commerce](#) annual Awards Dinner was held Wednesday evening against the backdrop of a picture perfect day and rolling greens at [Essex County Country Club](#). Over 150 guests turned out to honor the true “heroes” of the West Orange community.

Master of Ceremonies, [Matt Schwartz](#), welcomed the audience and noted that tonight’s event was all about community and one another. [Jordan Baris, Sr.](#), led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Paul Petigrow, West Orange Chamber of Commerce President, then introduced Mayor Rob Parisi. Parisi said that as a kid he grew up watching Star Trek and envisioned a future overwhelmed by technology. Noting that most of the people in the audience “were the last generation born before computers” he said that West Orange may be a 12.5 square mile town with 100 miles of roads, but it was the contributions of people in the community that made it special. “Technology is only a tool,” he said, “it has no soul...love, pride, and human touch is what’s important.”

Lou LaSalle of St. Barnabas introduced the evening's Guest Speaker, Steve Adubato, who spoke about the first responders in Boston, the first responders during 9/11, and in any local crisis. "How do you train someone to be courageous?" he asked, saying that first responders are afraid, but they choose to help when it's most important. Adubato praised the evening's recipients, and said he knew he was in the presence of true heroes, who often did not get the attention and respect they deserved.

Paul Petigrow presented Matt Schwartz, former president of the West Orange Chamber of Commerce, with a special award recognizing his contributions to the WOCC and community.

The Presentation of Awards then began. West Orange Fire Department Captain Tony Vecchio mentioned Tuesday evening's Promotion and Swearing In ceremony, saying that WOPD promoted two firefighters to captain and swore in 14 new recruits. He then gave the West Orange Fire Department award to Jay McManus, describing the rescue of two individuals in a trapped elevator, one of whom was medically impaired. McManus entered the elevator from the ceiling hatch to rescue the woman and other occupant, ensuring that medical care was immediately available to her.

Police Chief James Abbot spoke on behalf of Sergeant John Morella, this year's West Orange Police Department recipient, who was unable to attend the ceremony. Abbott noted that Morella's work as a School Resource officer and Supervisor from 2006-11 had created an SRO system which has become the model for New Jersey; that his commitment to developing the annual Junior Police Academy via grants and programming allows 90 students to attend, instead of the original 30; and he has been integral in the redesign of the Washington Street Police Substation, soon to open with basketball and volleyball courts. Morella is also spearheading a Mock Shooter Drill to be held in August at Liberty Middle School. He acquired a 140K grant for the event, the first of its kind in New Jersey.

Deputy Chief Chris Pollinzano then recognized Glen Coppola with the West Orange First Aid Squad Award. Glen has been active with the WOFAS for 8 years and has worked his way up to becoming a Senior Tour commander, a position he has held for two years. He has trained in all aspects of EMT, CPR, ambulance functions, and the stress of dealing with the job itself. Coppola is a lifelong West Orange resident and graduated from WOHS in 2008. He graduated from MSU in 2012 and is a substitute teacher in the West Orange School district.

Interim Superintendent James O'Neill introduced Hazel Elementary School Principal Ed Acevedo, who accepted the award for Hazel. O'Neill said that "a school is the reflection of the vision and dedication of its Principal, and I know of no better example of this than Ed Acevedo." Acevedo just received his Doctorate degree. He was pleased to accept the award "on behalf of the students, teachers, and faculty,

who have worked so hard to provide a school community of nurture and support.” He noted that Hazel School was now celebrating its 107<sup>th</sup> year and that students are always encouraged to be good citizens. He noted how Hazel had received a [flag flown over the Capitol building after sending 300 Valentines to the troops](#). He also said Hazel was “100% proficient” according the new [NJSDOE’s latest report](#), and how Hazel outperforms 54% of the schools statewide.

Matt Schwartz then announced [Arden Courts](#) as the West Orange Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year. Gail Kuchavik, Certified Gerontologist at Arden Courts, accepted the award. She thanked the doctors and staff for their care and commitment to providing care for those struggling with Alzheimer’s and other forms of memory loss. They are specialists in the area and provide numerous programs to support their residents and their families.

In addition to the awards, the recipients also received commendations from Senator Richard Codey, Assemblyman John McKeon, and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey of the the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.