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Beady speedy in rejuvenating The Chapel of the Four Chaplains

A Marconi resident will continue to revitalize a Philadelphia Navy Yard-situated entity through its annual awards dinner.

Jan. 28, 2016



For every believer of sentiments such as “It’s a dog-eat-dog world” and “Nice guys finish last,” one would hope to find someone like Christine M. Beady, who prefers to promote the sensibility of selflessness. On Feb. 3, the 42-year-old executive director of The Chapel of the Four Chaplains, 1201 Constitution Ave., and fellow followers of the belief that altruism benefits all will gather at the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 5 for the 48th annual Four Chaplains Day Awards dinner.

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“My heart is here,” the resident of the 2900 block of South Carlisle Street said from her Philadelphia Navy Yard-based workplace. “Being affiliated with this chapel and our memorial foundation is to know that we can’t afford to waste time thinking only of ourselves. We must constantly acknowledge how much others need us.”

The Marconi occupant will celebrate her four-year affiliation with the chapel Feb. 7. The space commends the quartet of clergymen who gave their life jackets to USAT Dorchester passengers when the vessel became a Feb. 3, 1943 torpedo casualty and honors the rest of the dashed ship’s personnel. A staunch proponent of the story’s advocacy for placing others before oneself, Beady will mark next Wednesday as an occasion to continue to curb the advances of “me-first” attitudes that often trouble contemporary society.

“The focus isn’t on me, and it isn’t on you,” she said of her allegiance to learning the facets of focusing on communal evolution. “It’s up to us to better our neighborhoods and recognize each of us has wonderful contributions to make.”

The lucid leader will welcome as many as 200 people to the Northeast Philly-situated ceremony, a total that would mark a fivefold increase on the 2014 tally and a 40-person increase from last year’s event. Those figures and the growth of enterprises such as the Legion of Honor and scholarship program stand as huge accomplishments that have occurred during her tenure, but Beady banishes any suggestion that she should brag.

“Yes, the chapel was in some financial and organizational trouble when I came aboard, and there were doubts about its sustainability and future, but I’m just someone who has worked to keep this amazing location, which I see as a cemetery for those who perished that night, going strong,” she said. “Our mission has always been to recognize ordinary people who do extraordinary things, and I love that I can help that desire to thrive.”

With two Gold Medal recipients and a Humanitarian Award victor heading the present’s nod to the past and offering trust in a prosperous future, Beady figures to find ample examples to back the foundation’s “Unity without Uniformity” motto as a harbinger of continued maturation.

“Education is a huge piece of my life,” she said. “Each day I come to my job, I’m looking to become a little bit better at making people aware of our background and our plans for years to come. The disaster that inspired the formation of our foundation (by President Harry S. Truman) occurred almost 73 years ago, but in today’s times, when it’s easy to neglect the needs of others because we’re so adamant about gratifying our own wishes, it’s a fresh reminder that there are many opportunities waiting for us if we choose to shine our lights.”

The California native first fell for finding fulfillment through teamwork as a South Philadelphia High School Business Academy registrant. Coming of age on the 2200 block of McKean Street, she aspired to become a better student of the world and came to tab Martin Nock, president and chief executive officer of Communities in Schools of Philadelphia, and Ilene Merlino, Director of Operations at Philadelphia Academies, Inc., as influential beacons who helped her luster to grow.

“They fine-tuned my passion for getting to know people and gave me insights on how I could go about becoming a leader,” Beady said. “In every endeavor for the chapel and the foundation, I want to stand tall and represent the organization well.”

Deeming the City of Brotherly Love a perfect spot for amplifying appreciation for history, diversity, and integrity, she attended Community College of Philadelphia and Peirce College, completing the latter's 18 courses in 16 months. With hopes to secure her master's through the Center City higher learning location and to obtain a doctorate in nonprofit management and operations, she engages in daily reflections on education's potency, a practice that makes her present position all the more rewarding.

"It's so easy for some people to forget the past and not try to make connections between what is going on today and what sacrifices people made to help us to be here," the vigilant overseer, whose pre-Chaplains employment at Steppingstone Scholars united her with Philadelphia region youngsters and their families in the pursuit of "academic success, opportunity, and a college degree," said. "In this line of work, I am always staying on top of nonprofit trends because, along with networking, it's very important to be a bearer of the value of forging healthy bonds with work that reminds us of how we're to lean on one another for guidance and support."

Beady shares those blessings with her husband, Brian, and their two children. The trio and sister Michelle Nolfi, the location's other employee, help to make the chapel a thriving destination for lovers of the past and lauders of the future, including those who have held their nuptials there. With prospective articles on the venue's ascension as an upholder of benevolence, a likely lengthy lease extension from the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., and parish status whenever The Navy Yard adds residential units, the 2014 South Philly Review Difference Maker, relatives, and board members have kept hope afloat and are excited about preserving the memories of chaplains George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington.

"We're really re-engaged," Beady said. "I find it hard to stay away from here because their example speaks to me; their legacy looms large."

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