

Katherine "Kay" Wyrick

1923 -

"I try to teach young people that you are somebody. Work hard and go out and prove it. Work, earn, learn."

- Kay Wyrick

Katherine "Kay" Wyrick, a longtime activist and volunteer on behalf of abused, neglected and pregnant youth, was born Katherine Daniels on May 18, 1923 in Hartford. She surmounted overwhelming odds to become a role model for those who care about others. A difficult childhood led to her arrival at Long Lane Industrial School for Girls, a facility for underage pregnant girls and adolescent female criminals. Wyrick was neither; she just needed a home. She fondly recalls the lessons and structure she learned at Long Lane.

At the age of thirteen, she came to work in Waterbury as a domestic, a job she kept for seven years. After working various jobs through the years and beginning her own family, Wyrick decided to become a foster parent in 1955. During the early 1960s she bought an old car barn on Caroline Street, renovated it and created Pride House. In 1967, she raised money to buy the old Salvation Army building on Cherry Street and founded PRIDE. Its mission is to assist in the development of youth through education, cultural activities and job opportunities.

Wyrick and her husband, James, ran Pride House Group Home for troubled girls from 1976-1985. As foster parents, they have nurtured seventy-five young adults, helping them stay off the streets, develop good work habits and learn the value of money.

Wyrick has crusaded against racial injustice since she experienced official segregation on a trip down South in 1942. Many years prior to the now famous Rosa Parks incident that triggered the Civil Rights marches, a young Wyrick likewise refused to give up her seat on a bus in Alabama - and was successful. That type of determination helped set her on a path from which she has never deviated. She has been a member of the NAACP for over fifty-five years and has fought to have Black history taught in the local schools.

Over the course of fifty years of service, Wyrick has received numerous awards for her commitment to young people. The Masons gave her a plaque for outstanding community service. She was honored by the Waterbury Bar Association as the first recipient of the Liberty Award and by the NAACP as the first to receive the Region II Youth Advisor Award. She was one of five people to earn the Connecticut Jefferson Award, given to people who go above and beyond the call of duty volunteering in their communities.



Wyrick won the Hiram Hayden Award that recognizes those who have given their time and talent for the betterment of their fellow citizens and was given the Humanitarian Award by the Anderson Boys' Club.

In 1999 Wyrick was honored as an outstanding parent for National Parents Day, one of eleven people selected for the nationwide tribute that acknowledges parents who are working to keep children safe, healthy and drug free. The award was a 10-inch acrylic flame that symbolized lighting the way for children. While dressed in rumpled hats and colorful clothes and brimming with pride, enthusiasm and a no-nonsense personality, Kay Wyrick is difficult to ignore. She is the inspiring mentor who has illuminated the lives of many people.