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Bill Guarinello Celebrates 40 Years at HeartShare

(Brooklyn, NY)— This past year marked a special milestone for HeartShare Human Services of New York's President and CEO William R. Guarinello—his 40th anniversary with the agency. This accomplishment was celebrated throughout the year at agency events including the Annual Spring Gala and Auction and Employee Recognition Dinner.

From an early age, Bill Guarinello has been dedicated to helping others in need in his community. It began in high school with coaching sports to local children, and has developed into a career helping thousands of children, adults and families through counseling families in crisis to developing programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities including autism.

As a recent college graduate looking for a job, Bill was hired by HeartShare, then known as Catholic Guardian Society of Brooklyn and Queens, as a social worker. In 1970, social work was not a popular field for men, but with a degree in psychology it seemed a perfect fit. His experience working with youth made him a natural mentor to adolescent boys looking for a positive male role model.

Always willing to accept more responsibilities and help in any way he could, Bill ascended the ranks at HeartShare. One specific assignment that was a real challenge was the daunting task of opening a new family counseling office in Red Hook, Brooklyn. The agency recognized a need in this neighborhood for the services they offered, but didn't have a lot of financial resources to put towards it. After months of hitting the streets and meeting with building management companies, Bill was able to locate office space that met the agency's needs, and fit the budgetary restrictions. Even though it was a small office with room for only one desk and one phone, it was enough to get the family counseling program started, which now helps hundreds of families each year.

Following the expose' of the Willowbrook Developmental Center on Staten Island in 1977, and with his recent success on the family counseling project, Bill was charged with the task of developing program sites for individuals with developmental disabilities. Within two years, HeartShare was operating two group homes for individuals with developmental disabilities—one for young men and one for children. Since then, 27 group homes and more than 20 supportive apartments, four early childhood centers, one school-age program, one evaluation center, 10 adult day programs, a variety of family support programs, and a medical clinic have been opened under his leadership.

By 1980, Bill was appointed Deputy Director of HeartShare. One main responsibility was to develop a strategic plan and improve the financial stability of the agency, which he accomplished. At the time, the agency had an operating budget of \$3.7 million, but was in a serious negative fund balance position. Within ten years, the budget had grown to \$28 million and was in the black. Today, HeartShare's annual budget is \$96 million.

In 1985, Bill was named Executive Director, and, in 1991, was promoted to President and CEO. Since then, HeartShare has continued to expand its programs to meet the changing needs of the community and remain a vital resource for children and families of all backgrounds.

“I believe in a team-based approach to running the agency, and I have a good, strong team behind me. I was given the ability to put my imprint on something by my supervisors, and I am trying to do the same thing now,” noted Bill.

How did Bill stay with HeartShare for 40 years? “Every year has been an adventure; it never gets boring. Before I knew it, 10 years had gone by, then 20, and now I’ve been here 40 years. I couldn’t imagine working anywhere else.”

During its annual Employee Recognition Dinner, a special video was created in which the staff and program participants of HeartShare congratulated and thanked Bill for 40 years of leadership and dedication to HeartShare and those it serves.

In addition to his work at HeartShare, Bill remains a very committed member of the Brooklyn community. He became involved with his local Community Board 11 in 1984 and has been its Chairman since 1992, ensuring that issues important to his neighbors are heard and addressed.

“I have seen many changes and growth during the past 40 years,” Bill continued, “and yet there are still more things I want to accomplish.”

Celebrating its 97th year, HeartShare is a nonprofit organization that assists more than 25,000 New Yorkers. Its wide array of services assist individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities through numerous programs including education services, adult day programs, residential services, case management, recreation programs, family support services, and health services. It also provides counseling, after-school programs and assistance with foster care and adoption to children and families, supports people affected by HIV/AIDS, and administers low-income energy assistance programs. For more information, visit www.heartshare.org or follow HeartShare on Facebook or Twitter.

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