

Founder of Pocketful of Joy Receives Standing Ovation from Women & Girls Fund

WINDHAM, Conn. – For her dedication to helping children, especially girls, Pocketful of Joy Founder, Charlotte S. Hunter, was met with a standing ovation at the In Celebration of Women Breakfast.

“When they did that I realized, ‘Oh, they really heard me,’” Hunter said. “It was nice, it really touched me.”

The seventh annual breakfast, held Friday, May 13 at Eastern Connecticut State University, was hosted by the Windham Area Women & Girls Fund, which is part of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut.

Hunter, of **Storrs**, spoke briefly about her organization’s commitment to helping children and working with elders and mothers in three communities in Tanzania.

Pocketful of Joy is a non-profit that assists in implementing and sustaining programs that address the health, education and well being of children in Tanzania, without compromising their way of life.

The organization aims to teach students at the schools, Byeya, Ntoma and Nyakataare, to nurture their own self-confidence so they realize their potential. Programs Pocketful of Joy initiates look to stimulate these students’ thirst for education.

At Friday’s breakfast, Hunter told the audience about Pocketful of Joy’s first college graduate – Temu E. Mwijage, who now works for the organization, overseeing its efforts in her community. Mwijage, whom Hunter calls Mama Tem, graduated college in 2009 and also works as a district school inspector.

Hunter also touched on how she works with mothers, encouraging their voices to be heard. After noticing that women were rather reticent when their husbands were present, Hunter split up the men and women and worked with them separately.

“The women really began to speak and give their opinions,” Hunter said. “That was a shift.”

And in listening to these women, Hunter gained their trust.

“Mothers are now beginning to bring me their children who are much sicker than the majority of kids,” she said.

Several children who Pocketful of Joy works with have cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Providing health care has been a mission for Hunter and the organization since it began. For instance, children are provided with medicated soap to treat ringworm and other topical fungal infections, and, Hunter said, hygiene seminars will soon be implemented.

“Women are trusting me more and more,” she said, “because they know that I’ll help them to the best of my abilities.”

Although her speech was short, it seemed to make an impact on those in attendance.

“I think we all spoke from our hearts,” Hunter said. “That’s what made it so special.”

Among Hunter were other speakers including the Eastern Connecticut State University President Elsa M. Núñez and Secretary of State Denise Merrill.



CUTLINE: Founder of Pocketful of Joy, Charlotte S. Hunter received a standing ovation at a Women & Girls Fund breakfast on May 13. Pictured from left are President of Eastern Connecticut State University, Elsa M. Núñez, President of Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Alice Fitzpatrick, board chair for the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Laurel Butler, Secretary of State Denise Merrill, Hunter and trustee for Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Rheo Brouillard.

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