

On Monday evening, November 13th, the area's finest restaurants and caterers will join together at the Indian Trail Club in Franklin Lakes for the 25th Annual ...*Fall Night of Fine Dining*. On this special occasion, West Bergen is honored to present its prestigious Distinguished Service Award to outstanding community leaders Mary Meakem and Wayne Angelbeck of Ridgewood.

Over the years, Mary and Wayne have been active and dedicated West Bergen supporters. Mary has been a member of West Bergen's Foundation Board since 2015 and chaired the Grand Slam for West Bergen's Kids event for the past two years. Wayne has joined Mary in her commitment to the Agency and played the role of Santa for West Bergen's Partial Care Holiday party this past December. A few weeks ago Mary and Wayne celebrated their 3rd wedding anniversary. Although they may not look like your typical newlyweds, they are at the "starting line" of a new life together. They met in 1984 while working together at The Hertz Corporation in New York City, where Mary started a 22 year career. A graduate of Marymount Manhattan College, she relocated with Hertz to Park Ridge NJ in 1988. With two young boys, she soon realized that life in the suburbs was not as accommodating to working moms as the city had been. She left Hertz shortly thereafter and began a life of volunteerism. Initially, she worked at her sons' schools, as a Board member on the Home & School Association at both Willard Elementary and Ridgewood High School. At Willard, Mary created a lunchtime program to foster a healthier diet of respect and kindness. At RHS, Mary co-chaired the 1998 Project Graduation and worked on the Jamboree Costume Committee for 7 years.

Another opportunity arose when a good friend introduced Mary to the YWCA. Its mission statement ~ "The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all" said it all. She served on the YWCA Board for 4 years but continues to enthusiastically support the important work they do.

Mary is a member of Church of the Presentation in Upper Saddle River. A women's retreat, known as Cornerstone, changed her understanding of what a spiritual life could be. Wanting other women to experience the same welcoming, non-judgmental, spiritual opportunity, Mary joined the Core Committee overseeing many future Cornerstone weekends. As the boys became more independent, Mary looked for something more ambitious. A friend recommended an introductory 8 week course in Pastoral Care at Valley Hospital, which led to a five year commitment to Clinical Pastoral Education at Nyack Hospital and then Christ Hospital in Jersey City. "I loved the diversity of the patients I served and realized that no matter how vastly different we are in terms of religion, economic status, gender, ethnicity, tradition or nationality, the depth of love we all share for our family and friends is the same." Valley Hospital has been a good partner for Mary as well. While she was searching for a good volunteer "fit", Mary became certified as a Doula for childbirth. Although her need for 'a good night's sleep' kept her from becoming involved much further, she has continued to work with The Foundation and is a Charter Member of the 'Women for Health' Steering Committee, a group of female philanthropists who care about the quality of healthcare in Northern New Jersey.

Mary's older son, Bill, married to Sarah, lives in Morris Plains and has a fabulously fun 8 year old daughter, Ella. When her younger son, Paul, married Danielle just 2 months ago, Mary was very proud when they asked her to officiate. Mary reflects that "looking back, the ribbon that connects the best of my volunteer experiences has been community. The extraordinary people I have met along the way have enhanced my life in so many ways, with new insight and joy".

Wayne earned an undergraduate degree from Hofstra University, and a graduate degree from LIU (CW Post). After graduating from Hofstra, Wayne was employed in finance for the vehicle rental and leasing market for his entire career. Raised on Long Island, his first employment was with Avis Rent a Car for ten years and then with rival Hertz for a few years before he joined the Penske Organization, when Roger Penske acquired Hertz's Truck Division. He remained with Penske until his retirement and relocation to Bergen County to join his then fiancée, Mary, in early 2013. Since retiring, Wayne has pursued a number of charitable activities and enjoys the satisfaction these organizations provide. In addition to volunteering with Mary at West Bergen, Wayne is also involved with Paterson Habitat for Humanity as a Board Member and a Construction Volunteer, and is the Costume Chairperson for Ridgewood's Jamboree. "Since becoming a Ridgewood resident, I have been overwhelmed by the

generosity of friends, family and the full Ridgewood community. Joining Mary and her friends at West Bergen has been a wonderful experience and I look forward to continuing to support the Agency in any way needed.”

Mary and Wayne are also proud of their support of Pony Power in Mahwah, NJ. A non-profit organization, Pony Power gives at-risk children and adults a unique opportunity to ride, care for and interact with horses. These activities, as well as spending quality time with their granddaughter Ella, “fills their lives with meaning and great joy.” Although Mary and Wayne might be at the “starting line” of a new life together . . . **THE BEST, FOR THEM, IS DEFINITELY YET TO BE!**