

HAC Staff and Supporters Gather for 35th Annual Meeting

"Just do a little bit every day" was the advice HAC CEO Rick Presbrey passed on at HAC's 35th annual meeting, held April 7 at the St. Pius X Parish Life Center in South Yarmouth.

"I like the idea of making a difference – and I think we have," said Presbrey. "We're always looking at the undone thing, but when I look back at 35 years, we've done a lot."

Among HAC's accomplishments in the past year was the completion of a strategic plan, which includes adding job creation and job training to HAC's mission. The agency has also committed to going green. "It's something we must do all the time, and when it's difficult, we have to find the way," said Presbrey.

Jack Delaney, chairman of the HAC Board of Directors, said the HAC staff helps people from all walks of life. "To know



Honorees at this year's annual meeting are (from left) Joe Valle, Joan Valle, Christian Valle, Tom Howes and Julie DeMello of the Valle Group; Rep. Matt Patrick and Chris Austin, with Rick Presbrey.

that people have a place to go for some guidance and steering for the rest of their lives is a great feeling," he said.

Michael Baker, chair of HAC's Finance Committee, said the agency's increase in net assets of \$434,900 (to a net worth of \$4.9 million) was "a remarkable performance by a nonprofit in a very difficult year."

Hor d'oeuvres for the event were prepared by Chef Roland of Falmouth. Desserts were baked by graduates of the NOAH Center's culinary-arts training program.

The keynote speaker was Aaron Gornstein, executive director of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA).

The foreclosure crisis, he said "is the most complicated issue we've ever dealt with at CHAPA," but he said there soon could be good news. "I'm optimistic the Legislature will pass a foreclosure bill by July 31." The bill would provide more protection for tenants and a new mediation process for homeowners and lenders. "It's a great step forward."

Gornstein called efforts to repeal Chapter 40B "the biggest threat to affordable housing we've ever seen. It's the most effective housing law in the country, bar none. It accounted for over 80 percent of the affordable housing on the Cape in the last 10 years."

In response to those who say 40B should be repealed because Massachusetts lags behind other states in creating affordable housing, Gornstein said, "That is completely illogical. That's like saying we still have pollution, so we should eliminate our environmental laws."

Rep. Matt Patrick Wins Presbrey Public Service Award

"Matt Patrick exemplifies everything I would hope to find in an elected official: passion, integrity, courage, stamina, compassion and vision." Those words by last year's Presbrey Public Service Award winner Rabbi Elias Lieberman apply to all the honorees at Housing Assistance Corporation's 35th annual meeting.

Allison Rice, HAC vice president of operations, presented HAC's first Human Services Partner Award to Chris Austin, executive director of the Homeless Prevention Council. Austin was recognized for her dedication to bettering the lives of Lower Cape residents struggling with housing and homelessness.

"Chris is an inspirational person, not because she has a halo," said Rice. "She does what's right, no matter what, and always has the courage to do it."

The Valle Group, a Falmouth-based development company, received HAC's first Business Partner Award in recognition of its work in developing award-winning affordable housing for HAC and other nonprofits on the Cape.

When you deal with the Valle Group, "It's not always about business, but it's always about relationships," said Gisele Gauthier, HAC director of housing development. "They have raised the bar on integrity, almost out of reach."

Rabbi Elias Lieberman introduced this year's winner, Rep. Matt Patrick.



Rep. Matt Patrick poses with Rabbi Elias Lieberman, last year's Presbrey Public Service Award winner.

"Not only am I one of his constituents, I am also a tremendous fan of this man," Lieberman said. "He has demonstrated consistently that he is not prepared to sacrifice his principles to win an election."

Other past winners in attendance were Bob Murray, Mary Lou Petitt, David Willard, Art Kimber, Judy Barnet, Pearl Wolfson and Rick Presbrey.

Just as Rabbi Lieberman's description of Rep. Patrick applied to the other honorees, Joe Valle's words on receiving the award could easily have been spoken by Rep. Matt Patrick or Chris Austin: "Life's greatest rewards are for those who bring joy to others – and we feel those rewards every day."