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Hightstown woman honored for work in advocacy for quality health care



Amy Mansue, right, CEO of Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, with physical therapist Laura Feiteira and patient Casey Bardowell. (Courtesy of Children's Specialized Hospital)

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TRENTON — Hightstown resident Amy Mansue, president and CEO of Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, has been honored twice in recent weeks for her leadership and advocacy for quality health care.

She was inducted into the New Jersey Business Hall of Fame on Thursday. And on March 29, she was one of six women to receive the Evangelina Menendez Award — a distinction created by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) to honor women who demonstrate “compassionate, effective advocacy on behalf of New Jerseyans.”

Children’s Specialized Hospital provides specialized care for children affected by brain injury, autism, spinal cord injury and other illnesses. It is the largest pediatric rehabilitation health system in the country.

“The mission of this place is just amazing,” Mansue said.

Since she became CEO in 2003, the hospital has received a number of prestigious recognitions, including NJBiz Healthcare Heroes’ “Hospital of the Year” title in 2012.

The Business Hall of Fame ceremony was held at Newark International Airport.

The induction — granted to New Jersey’s “ultimate role models” — is presented by Junior Achievement, an organization dedicated to educating young people about business and economics.

Thomas Bracken, president and CEO of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, and Peter Coccoziello, president and CEO of Advance Realty, also were inducted. Mansue said she felt humbled to be recognized among them.

She said that credit is due to the entire team at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

“I really, truly believe this is an acknowledgement of the work that everyone does at Children’s Specialized Hospital, not just me,” she said.

The hospital has 12 sites in New Jersey. Mansue divides her time between New Brunswick and Mountainside, while making a point to visit the other locations, she said.

She moved to Hightstown in 2000 to be close to her parents in Plainsboro, where she grew up.

She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in social work from the University of Alabama.

“As a social worker, I was very interested in how the policies were made that impacted how people needed care and needed assistance,” she said.

This interest led her to work as a health care policy adviser for Jim Florio when he served as governor from 1990 to 1994. She later worked in the health insurance sector before returning to the governor’s office to serve Jim McGreevey as Deputy Chief of Staff.

In 2003, when the Children’s Specialized Hospital had an opening for its CEO position, Mansue decided to apply. She served on the hospital’s board from 1999 to 1997, so she knew it well, she said.

“I sort of threw my hat in the ring, just to get practice interviewing,” she said.

Mansue was nominated for the Business Hall of Fame by Melanie Willoughby, acting president of the New Jersey Business & Industry Association.

The two worked together 30 years ago, when Mansue was in Florio’s office and Willoughby was with the New Jersey Retail Merchants Association.

“We have worked together on so many public policy issues that I have come to have great respect for her and her incredible knowledge about health care,” Willoughby said.

Mansue had asked the Rev. Karin Mitchell of St. David’s Episcopal Church of Cranbury to introduce her at Thursday’s ceremony. Junior Achievement asked Katirah Reed, a high school student and member of the organization, to introduce Mansue as well.

“(Mansue) is a true mentor of young people, in helping to inspire them to greatness,” Willoughby said, adding that her professional success and commitment in giving back to the community is an inspiration.

NJBiz selected Mansue as one of “New Jersey’s Best 50 Women in Business,” and NJ Spotlight named her as one of the top 10 health care policy analysts and experts.

Under Mansue’s leadership, Children’s Specialized Hospital has been named as one of the “Top 25 Best Places to Work” from 2006 to 2009 by NJBiz (it received the No. 1 ranking in 2008) and as one of the top 100 “Best Healthcare Employers in the U.S.” by Modern Healthcare in 2008 and 2009.

“It’s an amazing team of people,” Mansue said. “And I’m honored every day to play some small role in what they do to improve the lives of kids.”

She said the 22,872 children served by the hospital are her “surrogate children.”

“They show so much courage,” she said. “It’s amazingly humbling to see what they do on a daily basis.”
