

# The Best of Boston Road

By Joan Paris

*Turley Publications Correspondent*

From the dim light of a jail cell fundraiser to the bright lights of the Christmas season, the Boston Road Business Association (BRBA) shined its spotlight on Boston Road businesses last week.

Seventy Boston Road business members attended the seventh annual presentation of BRBA Annual Best of Boston Road Business Awards, social event a silent auction Jan. 20 at the Country Club of Wilbraham.

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The evening featured a salute to UMI Japanese Steakhouse as the 2010 Best New Business and Countryside Auto Body of Wilbraham as the Best Business of the Year,

along with 15 other best in the business awards.

The festivities kicked off with a 50-50 raffle, a silent auction, which grew good naturedly boisterous at times; and legacy remarks by one of its cofounders, Arlene Putnam, for manager of Eastfield Mall.

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Putnam, who founded the group 12 years ago with Wilbraham attorney John Soja, entertained the group by recalling early memories of the BRBA. Her favorite was the "Jail and Bail" fundraiser which required good, honest citizens to be detained in a jail cell supplied by the Putnam Vocational Technical High School students in Springfield until the "incarcerated person" could phone friends and family to pledge money towards a certain dollar amount.

She reminisced about former state representative Paul Caron (D- Springfield) playing the role of a black robe and white Whig - haired judge who would not release prisoners until they reached their quota. She regaled the audience with a story about music store owner Sam Falcetti who forgot his cell phone and couldn't call anyone to raise the money he needed.

He called his staff at Falcetti Music who quickly supplied his phone, which to his dismay was deader than his jail cell. Caron would not relent and release him until he raised his allotted amount. "No matter what!" she remembered.

## Honored Recipient

Business of the year winner Troy Hamel, owner of Countryside Auto Body in Wilbraham said, "I'm honored to be a reward recipient. It's nice to feel the community support. As an auto collision repair shop we face challenging times with changes in the auto insurance industry. Some great insurance companies have recently noticed our values and beliefs and we are now a preferred repair shop. The pledge I make to the community is we will always treat our customers with the utmost respect keeping your needs our number one priority. These are the values we honor and believe that's why we have won this award given to us by the community. Thank you so much."

Country Bank's Virginia Laung and Eastfield Mall's Carolyn Varnadore welcomed everyone on behalf of the sponsors, Gaudreau Group, Country Bank, Eastfield

Mall and Falcetti Music. Hot passed hors d'oeuvres included bacon wrapped scallops, Brushetta toast slices and sweetly flavored teriyaki strips alongside an appealing culinary table featuring small sweet grapes and assorted cheeses, a whipped cheese topping and crackers; and simmering red sauce meatballs.

Cheri Mills, branch manager of Webster Bank and Jocelyn Walker, Wilbraham-Hampden Times sales representative were event co-chairs, succeeding co-chairs, Jillian Gould, senior Mall marketing manager and Anne Pietras.

Walker said, "It's wonderful to see businesses get the recognition they deserve; especially the small businesses that compete with the big box stores-they truly are the backbone of the industry."

Mills talked about her role as co-chair. "It's been a challenging year; very rewarding, especially with these ladies. We're always looking for ways to bring value to the members and this year we will focus on bringing the (BRBA) website up to an interactive format."

Some of the silent raffle items at the event included gift certificates to local restaurants, a one-year supply of Friendly's ice cream, a floral arrangement by Wilbraham Flowers, a six month Scantic Valley YMCA family membership, a Big Y gift certificate, a large basket of coffee, teas and novelties by Country Bank, a Three Sisters chocolate basket, gift certificates to Quinn's Jewelry and an advertisement in Turley Publications, publisher of the Times.

## Sen. Candaras

Senator Gale D. Candaras (D- Wilbraham), recently named Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Revenue also presented the winners with state Senate citations, noting "You are so important to the vitality of the (Boston Road) corridor."

According to Putnam, The Boston Road Business Association (BRBA) is a Massachusetts not-for-profit



corporation whose purpose is to unite the businesses along Boston Road corridor in Springfield and Wilbraham to share resources and to stimulate and promote

growth and development of its business community.

Members are entitled to many benefits, including advertising and promotional programs, networking events, discounts at participating businesses, and a chance to have a voice and an ear in planning events and projects in the business corridor.

The signature shopping district banners all along the business corridor herald the group of merchants in Springfield and Wilbraham by being - as their logo says - "Boston Road. Close to home."

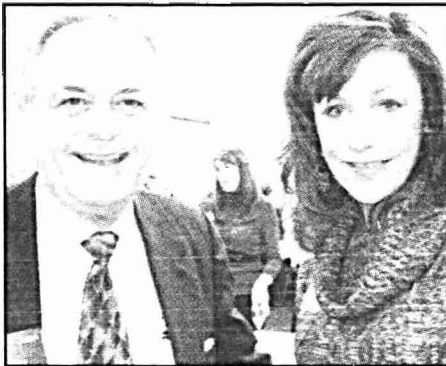
The new membership year for the association begins in February and membership costs \$75. For more information or to complete an online membership application, visit the website at [bostonroad.org](http://bostonroad.org) or call the office at 543-8000, x. 10.

## **Winners of the Best of Boston Road**

- Animal Care/Wellness: ..... Eastfield Hospital for Animals
- Auto Dealership: ..... Lia Toyota-Scion of Wilbraham
- Auto/Gas Service: ..... F.L. Roberts/Golden Nozzle
- Bank/Credit Union: ..... Country Bank for Savings
- Beauty/Spa/Barber Service: ..... Wilbraham Tanning Salon
- Food/Beverage Service: ..... Wilbraham Wine & Spirits
- Health/Wellness Service: ..... Wing Memorial Medical Center
- Professional Service: ..... Atty. Paul Barry
- Restaurant – Local: ..... Horizons Restaurant
- Restaurant – National: ..... Subway at Eastfield Mall
- Retail Store – Local: ..... Scented Garden
- Retail Store – National: ..... Marshalls
- Specialty/Gift Shop: ..... Wilbraham Flowers
- Home Improvement – Local: ..... Creative Walls
- Home Improvement – National: ..... Lowe's
- 2010 Best NEW Business: ..... UMI's Japanese Steakhouse
- 2010 Business of the Year: ..... Countryside Auto Body



**Sen. Gale Candaras (D-Wilbraham) presents Business of the Year winner Troy Hamel with a citation from Senate President Therese Murray.**



**Alan J. Stearley and Sandy Harvey represented Best of Boston Road sponsors, The Gaudreau Group.**

TIMES photos by Joan Paris

**Debbie Kelder (left) and Judi LaBranch of Scantic Valley YMCA celebrate winners of BRBA balloting.**

