

The Bedford Pound Ridge

RECORD REVIEW

Sweet charity comes to the hospital

MICHAEL MILLIUS

Very quietly and effectively, business lady Connie Milstein has established the template for how commerce and actually humanity should conduct themselves in the 21st century.

Ms. Milstein, through her creation of Connie's Bakery & General Store, which is a justified thriving success since opening less than two years ago at 41 South Moger Avenue in Mount Kisco, has proved how one person, in this case a woman, who has risen to the top of the corporate ladder (Ms. Milstein was the director of Emigrant Savings Bank, co-chairman of Douglas-Elliman Inc., New York City's largest residential real estate firm, and the attorney for the general counsel's office of the federal Department of Transportation, besides serving on the boards of an extensive list of international organizations) can sit down and figure out exactly what grassroots little business is needed in a neighborhood and how it can help humanity.

Fortunately for us, the little business she started was Connie's Bakery & General Store, an entirely philanthropic venture with 100 percent of the profits going directly to charities in Westchester and throughout the Hudson Valley. But the real beauty and genius of Ms. Milstein's little bakery that could and does is that the



At the grand opening of Connie's General Store and Coffee Bar at Northern Westchester Hospital are Christopher Peck, Simeon Manber, Jamie Jeffrey, Max Maksimyadis, Owen Sterling, Cathy Meyer, Joel Seligman, Connie Milstein and Gregory Green.

workers are all local people who had faced educational or economic barriers to sustainable employment. At Connie's, while being paid a living wage including health benefits, these workers participate in a full-time one-year baking apprenticeship program after which being empowered, they're helped to find new jobs at a higher level in the food

services industry. The cycle completed, room is then made for a new group to start this life-changing apprenticeship program.

"I've always believed that after having been put on earth and receiving the gift of life, each of us should give something back for having received that gift," said Connie Milstein. "I've had a very fortunate

life, and those of us who are lucky enough to have should give some of it back to those that don't."

And in the course of living this meaningful philosophy, Connie's Bakery has been creating such superiorly delicious baked goods and desserts that it's won awards and glowing reviews from each and every one of the more than two dozen newspapers and magazines that have written about it since its opening.

In the kitchen is executive pastry chef Simeon Manber whose credentials include positions with both Mario Batali at Babbo and Larry Forgione at An American Place.

"A lot of chefs were trying to get this job working with Connie, and when I was the one she hired it was like a dream come true, because it combines cooking, which I love, and also an important social service," said Mr. Manber. "I'm able to help people and give to charity in a kitchen where I can create the finest baked goods available, and for me, it doesn't get any better than that."

This month, Connie's Bakery & General Store opened a second location right in the lobby of the main entrance of the Northern Westchester Hospital. And what

"I've had a very fortunate life, and those of us who are lucky enough to have should give some of it back to those that don't."

— CONNIE MILSTEIN

better place to make their ultimate comfort food and cozy gifts available?

"The people at Connie's are so

sweet and they care so much," said Carin Grossman, the hospital's vice president of marketing and public affairs. "The merchandise in the store and the baked goods are of the highest quality. It's very much in line with what we are all about here at the hospital. It will be a great benefit for the community, our patients, visitors and staff. This is the recipe for a real win-win all around."

Now as you walk into the hospital's already welcoming entrance, on the right you'll find this feeling enhanced by Connie's Bakery & General Store looking like nothing else belongs there.

"This is so in sync with the hospital's philosophy and what our community is all about that it's just a natural fit to have Connie Milstein and her brilliant bakery right here in our lobby," says NWH's president and CEO Joel Seligman. "It's really a unique and special touch."

So it's a good thing that Connie Milstein is keeping so busy in our community, because she's the kind of person who's capable of running a country, and if she was doing that we'd surely miss her.