

The Bloomers Are Back

Words of praise for 17 people who put us in a new state of mind

On September 25, when we gathered at the state Capitol for the Fourth Annual Connecticut Bloomer Awards, the timing seemed auspicious. We had long planned the event, of course. But the ceremony in the beautiful Old Judiciary Room was held two weeks after the terrorist attacks on our country - two weeks when our country, in addition to the horrors it felt, also recognized the human capacity for good deeds and good will. We saw heroes aplenty.

Of course, the purpose of the Connecticut Bloomer Awards has always been to recognize people who contribute mightily to our quality of life. Local heroes, if you will. People who inspire us, guide us, set wonderful examples (all of whom, by the way, have been featured in *Northeast*).

Though I retired from *The Courant* in August, the newspaper continues to support this idea, and when we all gathered that night we were joined by Jack Davis, *The Courant's* publisher, and Brian Toolan, its editor, as well as special guest Denise Nappier, who, aside from holding the post of Connecticut state treasurer had the honor of being the daughter of one of the recipients. Here are excerpts from my remarks about the recipients:

Karen Rossi

From Yankee Doodles to Yankee Ingenuity. Years ago, when *Northeast*



Photograph by Steven Bamberg

At the Bloomer Awards presentation, from left, front, Judy Dworin, the Rev. George Easton, Jimmy Lundquist, Matthew Cavedon, Lary Bloom, Connie Nappier; at rear, Eugene Gaddis, Christopher Allen-Doucot, Karen Arcand, Karen Rossi, Bob Gregson, Rennie McQuilkin, Thomas Lee, Stephen Hancock, Linda Spoonster Schwartz, Denise Nappier and *Courant* publisher Jack W. Davis Jr.

launched its Twain's World project, a vision for Hartford's renewal based on its cultural heritage, one of the greatest supporters was the metal sculptor and business person Karen Rossi. She created for us a Twain's World mobile, which hangs in the *Courant* lobby and demonstrates her remarkable abilities as an artist, among them a clear sense of whimsy.

Even then we knew that when we looked up at the mobile, we were looking at the work of a star.

And now, Karen Rossi has demonstrated what a person can do with a

vision, spunk, talent and savvy. Her works are being reproduced by a Boston area manufacturer of home-decorating accessories. Karen Rossi's products account for millions of dollars in annual sales for Silvestri, and a bonanza, too, for QVC, and for Bloomingdales - which has just opened in-store Karen Rossi Boutiques.