

## LOCAL NEWS

Sep 28 2006 9:29 AM

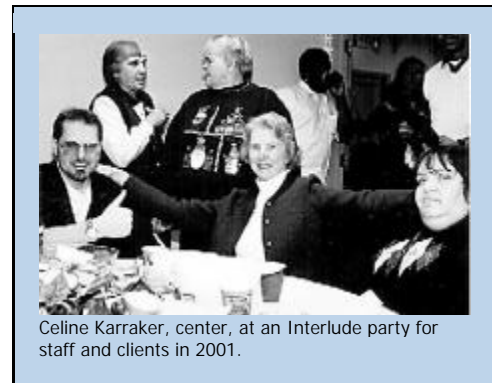
### Interlude fund named for founder

By Brian Saxton

THE NEWS-TIMES

DANBURY -- A new fund to help people with mental illness buy basic needs such as food, clothing and household goods is being developed by a Danbury-based nonprofit agency in memory of its founder.

Redding resident Celine Karraker, who died earlier this month at the age of 85, established Interlude Inc., in 1978 to provide housing, support services and advocacy for individuals with mental health problems.



The agency started with one group home for 10 residents and a minimal staff. Today, Interlude serves 41 clients in the Danbury and New Milford area with three residential programs.

Executive Director Kathleen Deschenes said Tuesday a \$500 donation made by one client from a small family legacy she received will be used to create the fund.

"The client specifically asked that the fund be established in Mrs. Karraker's name," said Deschenes. "Celine's legacy of improving the quality of life for our clients will live on through the work of Interlude and through this new fund. I think she would have really liked this."

The client, 40-year-old Debra Conrod, who is bipolar and has been with Interlude for 15 years, said Tuesday her action was aimed at helping her peers.

"Most of them are beyond poor," said Conrod, who lives at an apartment in Interlude's outreach program. "I know what it's like. I grew up that way. We couldn't afford things, even food."

With her small inheritance, Conrod said she was able -- for the first time -- to buy a new couch for her apartment.

"I've always shopped at thrift stores," said Conrod. "I can't tell you what a feeling it is to walk into a store like anybody else and purchase a new piece of furniture or clothing that wasn't used or worn by somebody else."

Conrod said she wanted the fund to be named after Karraker because of Karraker's work for the agency.

"She was always involved with everyone," said Conrod. "I remember how she'd often come down to the house and sit on the porch and talk. She just wanted to be with the clients and help them. I remember how she used to take me out to lunch or go shopping."

Karraker founded Interlude at a time when she was trying to help her own late daughter, Nell, who had schizophrenia.

Her work at Interlude included taking clients to recreational events, museums and wildlife preserves and arranging for singing and art lessons to provide them with social outlets.

"She wanted to reach out and help other people," said Hugh Karraker, her son. "I think this fund is a wonderful idea and the family is honored to have it named after her."

Although most of Interlude's clients receive entitlements of between \$600 and \$800 a month, Deschenes said because rent and utilities usually total \$550, they are left with little more than \$250 for food, clothing, bus passes and personal items.

"This meager allowance means that our clients must be extraordinarily frugal," said Deschenes. "These are people who are living well below the poverty level. Our clients rarely have the opportunity to give or receive gifts nor are they able to buy the items that we consider our basic necessities."

Once the fund is set up and operational, Deschenes said, a special committee will administer the clients' applications for grants.

"We're also planning to apply to area foundations to try to get their support for the new fund," said Deschenes. "This fund will contribute greatly to enhancing the quality of life of our clients."

Karraker, who also served on the Connecticut Board of Mental Health Advisory Council, was a member of the Redding League of Women Voters for 40 years.

Her grandfather, Leo Hendrick Baekeland, invented Velox, the first photographic paper and Bakelite, the first synthetic plastic.

A memorial service for Karraker will be held on Saturday at the Redding Community Center, 37, Lonetown Road, at 2 p.m.

Contact Brian Saxton at

[bsaxton@newstimes.com](mailto:bsaxton@newstimes.com)

or at (203) 731-3332

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Interlude offers three residential programs to men and women diagnosed with a primary psychiatric disorder and/or a substance abuse disorder:

An intensive residential support program in an agency-owned condominium complex with 24-hour on-site staffing. An intensive residential recovery program inside a private home with 24-hour on-site staffing. An outreach program for 24 men and women living in the Danbury and New Milford areas. Clients receive case management services and live in agency-owned and leased properties and in client-leased apartments.