

THE HOUR

‘I loved making an impact’: Norwalk older adult living facility director retires after 26 years

[Abigail Brone](#)

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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, at right, poses for a photo with resident Gregory Roberts and his dog Zoe during a retirement party held for Windt by residents and staff at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring this month.

Christian Abraham / Hearst Connecticut Media

NORWALK — When Mary Windt moved back to the city from California and accepted an administrative role at The Marvin living facility, she never envisioned staying there for more than a quarter of a century.

At the time, The Marvin was a fledgling living facility for older adults on Gregory Boulevard, and Windt served as its first director in 1996. Nearly 26 years later, Windt, now 72, is set to retire Thursday.

“I was living in California at the time. I closed an agency out in California and decided to move back because my father was sick, and I found this job through a two-line ad in the New York

Times,” Windt said. “I never thought I’d be here 26 years later and living in the house I came back to, but it’s one of the best things I’ve ever done.”

The Marvin announced Windt’s intended departure in November and began the process of searching for a new executive director.

In her time at The Marvin and The Marvin Children’s Center, Windt helped more than 200 older adults find affordable housing and provided early education and child care for more than 500 children, she said.

“I’ve loved what I’ve done. I loved making an impact,” Windt said. “When I started, the building was literally a hole in the ground. I love building a project and I’m going to miss that.”

Windt said she’ll miss the interactions with the residents and making a tangible difference in peoples’ lives as a trained social worker.

In her 26 years working at The Marvin and in affordable housing in Connecticut, Windt has seen awareness about the issue reach a boarder audience, but the problem has persisted.

“I think there’s certainly more recognition of the need for affordable housing in the state and nationally, especially for seniors,” Windt said. “Funding needs to continue to increase. When the prior administration was in, there was a strong commitment to funding housing. I think Ned Lamont has been strong in that, but COVID has gotten in the way of a lot of things and there’s an aging population that needs affordable housing.”

To qualify for affordable housing in Fairfield County, residents are required to have an annual income less than \$63,000, but many of those at The Marvin earn less than \$30,000, Windt said.

Taking a step back from her work at The Marvin, Windt has several cruises planned and intends to clear out some of her childhood home, where she still resides, before getting back into volunteering and offering help at The Marvin as a consultant.

“I considered retiring two years ago, but then COVID hit, and I wanted to make sure we got through COVID. We are in a good financial place and stable place with staff,” Windt said. “I have no specific plans. I’m not moving right away. I’m in the house I grew up in. I moved back 26 years ago after being away for 25 years and I have to clean out the house before I even consider doing anything.”

Windt spent many years caring first for her ailing father and then living with and caring for her mother. Now, Windt will focus on herself and her dogs.

Diane Kozar and her mother, Ann, were some of the first residents to move into The Marvin in 1997. At the time, Diane Kozar was only 40, and moved in with the understanding that she would be required to leave if her mother died before she was 62, Windt said.

When Ann Kozar died in 2013, her daughter was required to move out, but stayed in touch with Windt and her friends at The Marvin, submitting her application to move back in as soon as she turned 62.

Kozar, now 66, said Windt was integral in her decision to move back to The Marvin in 2020.

“When I came back here, it wasn’t new for me because I said, I’ve been here before and I was so happy to come back,” Kozar said.

Kozar said Windt organized a going-away party for her when she moved out following her mother’s death.

“I was so upset I had to leave, and they threw me a big party and she said, ‘Don’t worry, you’ll be back some day,’ and here I am back home,” Kozar said.

Kozar and a fellow resident performed a rap about Windt and her time at The Marvin during her retirement party last week.

For the family of The Marvin resident Fay Whitfield, 82, the facility was a new place, but felt familiar and comfortable due to Windt’s warmth.

Whitfield moved into The Marvin in 2018 after suffering a stroke and living in a private assisted living facility for a few years, Windt said.

Whitfield’s son-in-law, Peter Andino, said the family chose The Marvin after the private facility became too expensive.

“I didn’t know anything about them (The Marvin), so we went and interviewed and as soon as I met Mary and saw the team, I could tell very quickly she had built a really strong team,” Andino said. “I didn’t know a lot about this place, but in just meeting the team and eventually moving my mother-in-law from Wilton to here, was probably the best decision we made.”



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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, wipes away a tear during a retirement party held for her by residents and staff at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring this month.
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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, second from left, chats with guests during a retirement party held for her by residents and staff at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. From left, Sharon Rosen Green, Windt, Yvonne Senturia and President of the Board Patrick Shields. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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Leticia Kroke speaks during a retirement party held for Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, by residents and staff at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, standing at left, poses for a photo with resident Gregory Roberts and his dog Zoe during a retirement party held for Windt by residents and staff at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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The Marvin residents and staff hold a retirement party for Executive Director Mary Windt at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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The Marvin residents Mae Giannotti, left, and Diane Kozar perform a rap in honor of Executive Director Mary Windt during a retirement party held by residents and staff for her at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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The Marvin residents and staff hold a retirement party for Executive Director Mary Windt, seated at left, at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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The Malincarta Quartet band performs during a retirement party held by residents and staff for Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, poses for a photo with resident Diane Kozar during a retirement party held by residents and staff for Windt at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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Mary Windt, executive director at The Marvin, poses for a photo with resident Diane Kozar during a retirement party held by residents and staff for Windt at the facility in Norwalk, Conn., on Wednesday March 23, 2022. Windt, who has served at the facility for 26 years, is retiring at the end of March.
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