

## **EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL MARCH 18**

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### **The Bedford Family's Legacy of Giving**

WESTPORT, CT – MARCH 18, 2015 - The late Ruth Thomas Bedford of Westport was an avid equestrian, sailor and amateur pilot. She had a passion for the theater and worked as a stage manager for Rodgers and Hammerstein on several Broadway shows. She was also devoted to public service, and the Westport Weston Family YMCA and Norwalk Hospital, in nearby Norwalk, Connecticut were among her favorite causes.

Bedford, who died on June 15, 2014 at the age of 99, was unassuming, plainspoken, had no patience for ostentatious displays of wealth and shunned attention for her philanthropic contributions. "She had a heart of gold," remembers her friend Carol Bauer. "But she didn't want anyone to make a big fuss about the many donations she gave and all that she did for other people."

#### **A Life of Service**

Bedford, a YMCA trustee emeritus, worked in social services and for the American Red Cross after graduating from the Foxcroft School, a girls boarding and day school in Middleburg, Va. She was instrumental in helping the Family YMCA renovate and expand its original downtown Westport location during the 1980s. She and her sister, the late Lucie Bedford Cunningham Warren, provided the YMCA with most of the funding it needed to acquire the town's Central Firehouse and convert it into a fitness center. The sisters were also generous donors and active volunteers at Norwalk Hospital, where Ruth Bedford served into her early 90s, logging nearly 17,000 volunteer hours in the Hospital gift shop over five decades.

#### **A Legacy of Giving**

In leaving the Family YMCA and Norwalk Hospital estate bequests of \$40 million each, Ruth Bedford continues a family tradition of community philanthropy that began with her grandfather, Edward T. Bedford, a Standard Oil executive and founder of the Corn Products Refining Company, now Ingredion Incorporated.

In 1920, Edward Bedford purchased the Westport Hotel with plans to build a YMCA, dedicating the building to the Family Y in 1923. He also funded the organization's original swimming pool and

women's center. Edward Bedford's personal and philanthropic leadership was also instrumental to Norwalk Hospital's early growth and expansion. He donated half of the funds needed for a new residence for Hospital nurses and personally underwrote the cost of the Bedford Pavilion, which doubled the Hospital's patient capacity in 1929.

Edward Bedford's son, industrialist Frederick T. Bedford, and his wife, Lucy Thomas Bedford, were also generous Norwalk Hospital donors. Frederick Bedford helped the Family Y purchase land which, in 1945, became Camp Mahackeno, its summer day camp. The Mahackeno site is also the new home of the Family YMCA, which opened in October 2014 and is named the Bedford Family Center in honor of the family's long history of personal and philanthropic support of the organization.

"Generations of the Bedford family and other supporters have allowed the Family YMCA to serve our community in ever-evolving ways for nearly a century," said Jim Marpe, First Selectman of the Town of Westport. "Ruth Bedford's gift is a further testament to her family's commitment not only to the YMCA but also to improving the well-being of all who live and work in our community for the next 100 years."

According to Harry Rilling, Mayor of the City of Norwalk, "Since Norwalk Hospital is critically important to our community, this bequest from Ruth Bedford will have a profound, immeasurably positive impact on the people of Norwalk and the surrounding area."

The following leaders would be available to comment on the Bedford bequests and their importance to the communities of Westport and Greater Norwalk:

Congressman Jim Himes (CT-4) - (202) 225-5541

Harry W. Rilling, Mayor, City of Norwalk - (203) 854-7701

Jim Marpe, First Selectman, Town of Westport - (203) 341-1111

### **About the Westport Weston Family YMCA**

The Westport Weston Family YMCA is a 501(c) (3) non-profit charitable organization that enriches the community by developing and nurturing the potential of every child, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. The Family Y emphasizes the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility in its programs and services. An affiliate of the YMCA of the USA, the Westport Weston Family YMCA is governed by two boards comprised of community volunteers. As a private non-profit serving a public purpose, the Family YMCA endeavors to provide financial assistance to those who qualify. For more information, please visit [www.westportymca.org](http://www.westportymca.org).

### **About Norwalk Hospital**

Norwalk Hospital is a progressive, patient-centered, regional teaching hospital serving residents of southwestern Connecticut and adjacent New York. The 328-bed acute care, not-for-profit hospital offers Cardiovascular, Cancer, Orthopedic, Neurologic and Digestive Disease care with advanced diagnostics, innovative therapies and state-of-the-art surgery. The Hospital is supported by its very generous community through donations to the Norwalk Hospital Foundation. Norwalk Hospital is now part of the Western Connecticut Health Network and is one of the Network's three member hospitals, including [Danbury Hospital](#) and [New Milford Hospital](#), as well as their physician groups and affiliated organizations. Share your comments with us at [Facebook.com/NorwalkHospital](https://www.facebook.com/NorwalkHospital).

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