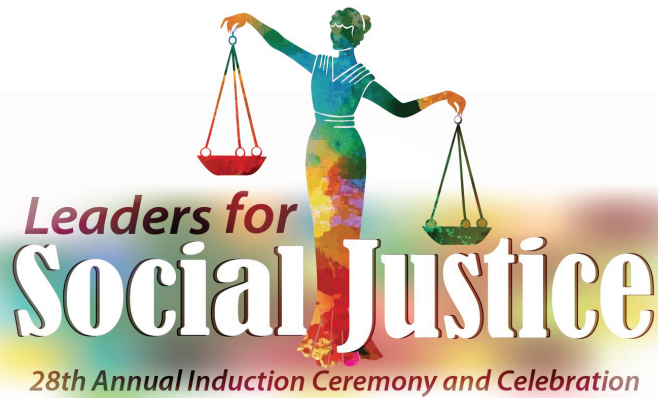




CONNECTICUT  
W O M E N ' S  
HALL OF FAME  
EDUCATE · INSPIRE



## SPOTLIGHT RECIPIENT

**Marilyn Ondrasik** Marilyn Ondrasik has fought for social and economic justice her entire career. As a VISTA Volunteer in NYC, she saw the power of community organizing to achieve social change – and she was hooked. At the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), she organized neighborhoods in Brooklyn and the Bronx that were “redlined” by banks (a refusal to lend in racially changing neighborhoods). Marilyn organized hundreds of people to take to the streets in picket lines and withdrawal campaigns to fight this discriminatory banking practice. Under intense community pressure, banks committed a total of \$100 million for neighborhood investment. Her work spurred the NY Legislature to pass the Community Reinvestment Act. Next she founded The Straphangers Campaign and organized thousands of subway riders to speak out about deplorable conditions. The campaign won \$5 billion for subway repairs and new subway cars, and creation of the Transportation Safety Board and MTA Inspector General.

Marilyn served for 17 years as Executive Director of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC). She worked with low/moderate income families to come together to identify issues and become advocates for change. Marilyn directed BCAC’s research-based community-directed advocacy, community organizing and mobilization. Among her accomplishments were: policy changes by the Bridgeport Housing Authority that opened up hundreds of additional units to low income families; millions of dollars in new education funding for Bridgeport schools including \$9.5 million for student behavioral and mental health needs; \$60 million for school repairs; and passage of the Connecticut ban on assault weapons.

She joined Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, a community economic development nonprofit that creates green jobs for those with multiple barriers to employment. Marilyn helped build its operation to deconstruct used mattresses, recycling component parts for industrial reuse. She spearheaded expansion into recycling paper and cardboard from used books while providing new jobs in the community. More recently she worked with school districts in CT to reach out to alumni to return to their old schools to talk to students about their post-high school journeys and the challenges they faced to inspire students to stay in school, graduate and pursue post-secondary education.