

Elected Officials Learn a Thing or Two from Norwalk's "Miss Betty"

US Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Norwalk Mayor Moccia, State Sen. Bob Duff, Rep Chris Perone and Mayoral candidate Harry Rilling all attended Sunday's annual picnic at The Marvin senior residence. At 98-1/2, Miss Betty's wisdom alone was reason to attend.



"I turn 100 in a year from March," Elizabeth Mayer said as she waited at a picnic table for her son Richard Mayer of Wilton to bring her a hot dog with mustard.

"Imagine! I'll be 100, like Norwalk is," said Elizabeth who is known to many at The Marvin senior residence as Betty.

On Sunday The Marvin held its annual picnic, and a number of special guests attended, including US Senator Richard Blumenthal, State Senator Bob Duff, Norwalk's Mayor Moccia, Democratic candidate for



Mayor Harry Rilling and State Rep. Chris Perone, who attended the event with his young son, Harrison.

Everyone is treated like family at The Marvin, and therein lies Elizabeth's secret. "I have the best family in the world," she boasted. "Plus I never complain and I stay active."

And, at 98-1/2, the soon to be centenarian is still busy making plans.



Senator Blumenthal speaks with Marvin Board Member, Torri Zaccagnino and husband Anthony. Credit: Mary Windt

Until November when she broke her hip, Miss Betty walked all the way to **Stew Leonard's** from The Marvin on Gregory Blvd. and returned via detour through South Norwalk, where she was born and raised.



"She'd still get in the sandbox and play with the children if not for that fall," said Betty's friend Mary Cararbe, who, at 90 often calls the weekly Bingo game. The children Mary refers to are the pre-schoolers at **Marvin Children's Center**, which is in the same building as the senior residence.

"I want to be on the Smucker's Jelly label," Elizabeth said as she glanced in the *direction of her daughter-in-law*. "Don't worry, Ada's in charge of that project," she said, as if Ada needed a reminder.

"I fell, yes, but I'll heal," Elizabeth said dismissively, before launching into a list of activities that have replaced the daily hike she took for nearly eight years. "There's massages and reflexology. And there's Wii Bowling. The Norwalk Police come a few times a year and we all play Wii."

As Betty shared some of the secrets of her longevity with Mayor Moccia, he was curious as to whether her regime included a glass of wine. "Too weak," Elizabeth declared, admitting she prefers a Manhattan, straight up.

"But they only serve alcohol on New Year's eve here," Elizabeth whispered afterward. "Could you imagine?"

"Miss Betty" as the pre-schoolers call her, is most proud of the framed photos the children presented her on her 90th birthday. And the collage they made for her 95th. They are displayed prominently in her spacious apartment, on the wall between the kitchen and the living room.



"I love this place," Elizabeth said. "It is very safe and they check on you. If you don't come down to check your mail in the morning they make sure you're alright. They're wonderful," she added pointing and waving to José Vivieca whose job she described as, "He does everything. He's a prince!"

"It's too bad Betty and Mary's friend Anne isn't here today," Elizabeth's grand daughter Heather Cramer said. "They call them the Golden Girls. Betty, Anne and Mary. Maybe next time. They're always a threesome."

There remains plenty to learn from Elizabeth, so there will definitely be a next time. Pizza and Wii with the Norwalk Police at The Marvin sounded like fun.

The Marvin is located at 60 Gregory Blvd. in Norwalk. **The Marvin Children's Center** is also located at 60 Gregory Blvd. in Norwalk.