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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance and Dr. Bianca Shinn-Desras to Be Honored at SPEF's 2026 Excellence in Education Awards

STAMFORD, CT., February 18, 2026 – The Stamford Public Education Foundation will present its annual **SPEF Community Giving Award to the Youth Mental Health Alliance (YMHA)** and its **SPEF Leadership Award to Dr. Bianca Shinn-Desras of Domus**. The event will be held on April 23 at 5:30 PM at the Italian Center of Stamford.

Event sponsors so far include NatWest Markets, Deloitte, Gartner, Stamford Health, and numerous individual community members.

“Bianca is a true advocate in every sense of the word. SPEF is proud to work with her in her capacity as Director of Family Advocacy at Domus, where we provide wraparound support to many of the same students. We are thrilled to recognize her for her efforts in making Stamford a safe, caring, and supportive environment for all children,” said **Magdalena Loucks**, Chief Executive Officer, Stamford Public Education Foundation.

Dr. Shinn-Desras is a dedicated community leader committed to advancing equity and protecting the dignity of all people. With more than 20 years of experience in social services, public health, and education, she has focused her career on disrupting systemic disparities and uplifting historically marginalized communities. She has held impactful roles at the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and the United Nations, strengthening her commitment to advocacy. She currently serves as Director of Family Advocacy for the middle school program at Domus, supporting students and families by building authentic bridges between schools, homes, and community-based resources. A proud first-generation Haitian-American, she is deeply rooted in her heritage.

“As both a parent and a community leader, I cannot think of a more deserving recipient of this award than the Stamford Youth Mental Health Alliance. They have brought families, schools, and local partners together around a shared mission: ensuring every child feels seen, supported, and empowered. Because of their leadership, Stamford is a stronger, more

compassionate community for our children.” said **Regan Allan**, Director of Education and Engagement, Stamford Public Education Foundation.

The YMHA is a community-wide collaborative committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of children, teens, and families in Stamford. The Alliance promotes awareness of youth mental wellness, supports accessible and inclusive care, and strengthens a coordinated system of prevention, early intervention, and support that fosters resilience and long-term well-being across the community. The YMHA is sponsored and facilitated by the Vita Health & Wellness Partnership and the City of Stamford, in partnership with Stamford Public Schools, the Stamford Department of Health & Human Services, and more than 50 clinical and community organizations.

About SPEF. The mission of SPEF is to elevate student success by delivering educational programs and solutions that promote equitable access to quality public education in Stamford. For nearly 30 years, SPEF has built strong partnerships within the school district, corporate community, and the City of Stamford, working tirelessly to support and enhance public education through funding, programming, and volunteer engagement. SPEF’s vision is a community where every student is equipped and inspired to thrive. The organization serves the diverse population of students and families across Stamford’s 23 Pre-K through 12th-grade public schools.

For more information about the 2026 Excellence in Education Awards or to purchase tickets or sponsorships, please visit www.spefct.org or contact Gabriel Otis, Director of Development & External Relations at gotis@spefct.org.

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