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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Free Class Helps Windham Parents Develop Communication, Discipline Skills

Thanks to a partnership among the Windham Public Schools, Windham Region United Way, and The Village for Families & Children, Inc., 29 parents of students in the Windham Public Schools graduated from the *Common Sense Parenting (CSP)* program on November 23rd, during a ceremony held at the Kramer Building on Prospect Street in Willimantic. Eleven graduates will now receive training to become CSP trainers.

CSP, developed by Boys Town in Nebraska, helps parents address issues of communication, discipline, decision-making, relationships, self-control and school success with their children using hands-on skills. In the six-week course, parents learn how to communicate effectively, avoid power struggles, give positive attention and praise, control their emotions, and balance discipline with affection.

The course was offered in Windham in both English and Spanish and taught by trained staff from The Village for Families & Children. “Parent involvement is a big key to the success of this class, and we’ve had a great group of parents,” said instructor Lynn Webber. “After the basic concepts are covered in each class session, we demonstrate the skills through role-playing. Parents bring their real-life situations to class and work through solutions together,” she added.

Instructor Carmen Valenzuela recounted a situation where one child was able to refuse cigarettes offered to him at a friend’s house using techniques his mother had learned in the class. “During the Preventive Teaching class, we talked about using ‘code words’ that allow older children a way out of difficult peer situations without making them feel embarrassed in front of their friends. This child was able to call his mother and say, ‘Mom, I forgot to turn off the game and I don’t want to lose the score. Can you pick me up?’ The mother knew he was in trouble.”

Skills learned through *CSP* have been proved to lessen children’s problem behavior, improve parent and family satisfaction, and build strong, healthy family relationships—all of which translate into better classroom behavior, increasing children’s chances for school success. Ensuring local children’s academic success is one of Windham Region United Way’s key goals.

The decision to offer *CSP* in Windham ties in to the Windham Public Schools’ District Improvement Plan. One of the plan’s chief objectives is to promote active partnership and engagement with parents and the community. The district will continue to encourage parent

participation in the *CSP* courses through its new Windham Middle After School Program and the Windham Elementary Schools' after school programs.

The Village for Families & Children, Inc. has been providing *CSP* classes for six years, and more than 1,250 parents have taken the course. In addition to the Windham program, *CSP* is currently offered at three locations in Hartford.

To learn more about *CSP*, please contact Kim Russo, at kruosso@unitedwayinc.org or (860) 456-0188, or Kimberly Martini-Carvell, at kcarvell@villageforchildren.org or (860) 236-4511. If you are interested in taking the course in Windham, please call the Windham Public Schools Office of Supplemental Services at (860) 465-2546.

For 85 years, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut has been meeting local human care needs in 40 towns, including the ten communities served by Windham Region United Way. With its network of partner agencies, volunteers and community leaders, United Way takes a leadership role in changing conditions to improve lives in the communities it serves.

For 200 years, the **Village for Families & Children, Inc.** has been serving children and families since 1809. A preeminent not-for-profit mental health/human services agency in the State of Connecticut, the Village continues its commitment to build a community of strong, healthy families who protect and nurture children. The agency's community-based services are comprised of three core programs: *Placement and Permanency* (adoption, foster care and family preservation), *Treatment*, and *Family and Community Support*. For more information about the Village, please visit www.villageforchildren.org.

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[PHOTO CAPTIONS]

[CSP graduation 11-23-09.jpg]

Twenty-nine parents of Windham students graduated from the *Common Sense Parenting* program at a ceremony held at the Windham Public Schools' Kramer Building in Willimantic on November 23rd. The free program helps parents improve family communication and bolster their children's academic success through techniques such as preventive teaching, effective praise, positive and negative consequences, and goal-setting. It is supported by a partnership among the Windham Public Schools, Windham Region United Way and The Village for Families & Children, Inc.

[CSP class session.jpg]

Common Sense Parenting trainer Carmen Valenzuela leads parents in a role-playing exercise to help them improve communication skills and enhance their children's school performance. The free course is offered to parents of students in the Windham Public Schools as part of a partnership between the school district, Windham Region United Way, and The Village for Families & Children, Inc.