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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Windham Region United Way Hosts 58th Community Celebration: VNA East and BJ's Honored; Rose Luka Named Volunteer of the Year

WILLIMANTIC, CT — More than 60 community leaders attended Windham Region United Way's (WRUW's) 58th annual community celebration held April 7 at Eastern Connecticut State University. VNA East and BJ's Wholesale Club of Willimantic were honored for their roles in the 2008 United Way Community Campaign, and Colchester resident Rose Luka received the Maurice Heon, Sr., Volunteer of the Year Award. Teresa Younger, executive director of the Connecticut General Assembly's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, was the keynote speaker.

Guests gathered from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Johnson Community Conference Room of the J. Eugene Smith Library to celebrate Windham Region United Way's accomplishments, including its contributions to the record-breaking 2008 Community Campaign, which raised \$28,156,916, and its progress in improving lives and changing community conditions in the Windham region.

"Windham Region United Way has had a very exciting year. Once again, our generous community demonstrated a willingness to work together," said WRUW regional advisory board chair Christine Paquette.

Susan B. Dunn, president and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, praised the efforts of United Way Community Campaign Champion Award recipients VNA East and BJ's Wholesale Club of Willimantic. "They demonstrate that both for-profits and non-profit organizations can reach success in dollars raised, participation and commitment – even in the face of tough economic times."

Paquette presented the 2008 Maurice Heon, Sr., Volunteer of the Year Award to Rose Luka for her dedicated service to the Windham region. Luka chose to donate the \$1,500 cash award that accompanies the honor to the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut, where she has volunteered for the past five years.

Four new members were welcomed to the Windham Region United Way regional advisory board during the celebration: Jose Aponte, of Quinebaug Valley Community College; Mario Conjura, of People's United Bank; Amanda DeVivo, of Willimantic Waste Paper Company; and Jerry James, of Northeast Utilities. Outgoing board members Paul Bushey, Marisol Feliciano, Joan Russoniello Goba, and Shawn Maynard were also recognized for their service.

Middle school students who completed the WinYouth Individual Development Account (IDA) program, a partnership of United Way, Access Community Action Agency, and Liberty Bank, were honored as well. The WinYouth IDA middle school program is a matched savings account program that includes financial literacy classes to young people to save for educational and career-related goals. It is one of numerous United Way-supported initiatives in the Windham region. Successful program graduates include Victor Alvarado, Josem Aponte, Joseph Aponte, Walter Aponte, Silas Avilez, Thomas Cloninger, Adrian Collazo, Edgar Collazo, Nicole Coppin, Jennifer DaSilva, Rafael Frutos Jr., Erick Galicia, Vania Galicia, Joshua Grajeda, Emmanuel Melendez, Jose Jaime Mendez, Jose Mendoza, Michael Mendoza, Kenia Morales, Miguel Morales, Katie

Morton, Ronsy Perez Jr., Tysheika Perez, Yvonne Picard, Christopher Rodriguez, Javier Rodriguez, Aleisha Rosado, and Jose M. Santiago Jr.

For almost 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. Contributions through United Way *Community Investment* are invested in programs to ensure success for children, strong families, and a safety net of services for all who are in need. For more information, visit www.unitedwayinc.org.

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PHOTOS BY ALAN GRANT

[PHOTO WRUW 2008 Heon.jpg]

Colchester resident Rose Luka (center) received the 2008 Maurice Heon, Sr. Volunteer of the Year Award at Windham Region United Way's (WRUW's) 58th annual community celebration, held at Eastern Connecticut State University on April 7. Luka chose to donate the \$1,500 associated with the award to Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut, represented here by Executive Director Georgette Katin (right). Christine Paquette (left), chair of the WRUW regional advisory board, presented the award.

[PHOTO WRUW UWCC Champion.jpg]

VNA East, based in Mansfield Center, and BJ's Wholesale Club of Willimantic each received a 2008 United Way Community Campaign Champion Award at Windham Region United Way's 58th annual community celebration on April 7. Shown here (left to right) are: Anthony Verterame, store manager of BJ's Wholesale Club of Willimantic; Susan B. Dunn, president and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; and Claudia Marcinczyk, president and CEO of VNA East.

[PHOTO WRUW 2009 RAB – new and old.jpg]

Windham Region United Way (WRUW) held its 58th annual community celebration at Eastern Connecticut State University on April 7. Shown here are members of the WRUW regional advisory board, including incoming and outgoing members. Back row, left to right: Robert Jennette, M.D., of Storrs; Rachele Parenteau, of Mansfield Center; Lourdes Ardel, of Coventry; Joan Russoniello Goba, of Lebanon; Paul Bushey, of Mansfield Center; Jerry James, of Columbia; and Marisol Feliciano, of Storrs. Front row, left to right: Mario Conjura, of Mansfield Center; Jose Aponte, of Windham; Yolanda Negrón, of Willimantic; Geeta Pfau, of Mansfield Center; Paul Heller, of Willimantic; Christine Paquette, board chair, of Mansfield Center; and Shawn Maynard, of Manchester. Not pictured are Matt Ellis, of West Willington; Doe Hentschel, of Willimantic; Angela LaTour, board vice chair, of Bozrah; and Amanda DeVivo, of Willimantic.

[PHOTO WRUW Youth IDA participants.jpg]

Windham area middle school students who completed the WinYouth Individual Development Account (IDA) program, a partnership of United Way, Access Community Action Agency, and Liberty Bank, were honored at Windham Region United Way's 58th annual community celebration on April 7. This matched savings account program includes financial literacy classes to teach young people how to save for educational and career-related goals. Left to right: Yvonne Picard; Edgar Collazo; Adrian Collazo; Jose Mendoza; Michael Mendoza; Denise Campagnano of Access Community Action Agency; Angela LaTour of Windham Region United Way and Liberty Bank; Kenia Morales; Aide Perez of Access Community Action Agency; Miguel Morales; and Joshua Grajeda. Not pictured but also honored: Victor Alvarado, Josem Aponte, Joseph Aponte, Walter Aponte, Silas Avilez, Thomas Cloninger, Nicole Coppin, Jennifer DaSilva, Rafael Frutos Jr., Erick Galicia, Vania Galicia,

Emmanuel Melendez, Jose Jaime Mendez, Katie Morton, Ronsy Perez Jr., Tysheika Perez, Christopher Rodriguez, Javier Rodriguez, Aleisha Rosado, and Jose M. Santiago, Jr.