

For Immediate Release

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Rain Went Away and Brought Back Another Day of Caring

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. – October 23, 2007. Despite falling temperatures, drizzling rain, and last minute rescheduling of workers caused by forecasted torrential showers, over 250 volunteers from the region's businesses and schools participated in the 2007 United Way of Eastern Fairfield County Days of Caring held at the Trumbull Nature and Arts Center. Volunteers worked diligently to build fences, lay drainage piping, paint the exterior and interior of the building, and clear and create gardens and pathways.

The event kickoff included speeches from 2007 United Way Campaign Chair Jeffrey Pino, President of Sikorsky Aircraft and Gina McCarthy, Commissioner of the State of CT Department of Environmental Protection. Pino spoke to volunteers about the importance of education, particularly science education, to our future workforce and the future of our country. Commissioner McCarthy addressed the serious state of our children's health with childhood obesity being at an all-time high, and limited socialization due to the amount of time our youth spend on-line, instant-messaging, or playing video games. "Because children no longer play outside, they are unfamiliar with the wonderful opportunities the outdoors provides," stated McCarthy, whose state program "No Child Left Inside" is designed to bring children and families, especially from urban areas, to the outdoors to enjoy and learn from.

"The pinnacle of our event this year was the participating of 45 second-grade students from Webster School in Bridgeport, and students from the Trumbull's Agri-science and Biotechnology Center," stated United Way President & CEO Merle Berke-Schlessel. "This was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate United Way's ability to effect change in the community, bring people together, and improve people's lives." Webster School in Bridgeport is one of the United Way's Schools of Hope. This initiative supports specifically designed programs at four local elementary schools with the end result of increasing third grade reading levels. Webster School has determined that field trips are one element to achieving their goal.

"It was such a positive experience for the students in the Agri-science program at Trumbull High School," stated Ray Baldwin, Town of Trumbull First Selectman and 2007 Days of Caring Honorary Co-Chair. Baldwin and fellow Co-Chair Joseph Hoffman thanked the high school students, and all of the volunteers that morning.

"The cold temperatures and constant drizzle did not scare away these hard-working, dedicated volunteers," stated Deborah Cox, Town of Trumbull Economic Development Director, and 2007 Days of Caring Committee member. "It was truly inspiring to see these great folks determined to build composting areas and laying drainage pipes for the gardens while they were rained on. They did not quit until the project was done."

The third day of the event, Thursday, October 11 had to be rescheduled due to heavy rain which made it impossible for volunteers to paint the exterior of the nature center. However, Tuesday, October 16 brought a sunny day and volunteers ready to give the exterior of the Nature Center a facelift. Over the course of the three days, volunteers built three new gardens and enhanced others, built fencing for a pumpkin garden, built a composting area, planted bushes for the United Way Children's Sensory Trail,

built and installed blue birdhouses, built an outdoor classroom space, painted the exterior of the building, and painted and enhanced two bathrooms, the kitchen and several indoor classrooms.

“This was truly a regional effort that demonstrated what great things that can be accomplished when we work together as a community,” said United Way’s Merle Berke-Schlessel.

United Way of Eastern Fairfield County’s mission is to mobilize a stronger, more caring community across Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull. We are focused on the underlying causes of our most difficult problems, including hunger, and creating preventative measures to ensure these problems do not recur. While many organizations address one issue, United Way focuses on the entire community. We are bringing people together from all across the community – people from government, business, faith groups, nonprofits, and ordinary citizens – to tackle the issues that matter most. United Way is committed to the bottom line results: the lives we change and the communities we shape. Find out more at www.thewaytocare.org.



Tuesday’s rescheduled volunteers worked on the exterior of the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center, giving it a facelift in preparation for the Fall Festival on October 20.



The beautiful weather provided the perfect opportunity for volunteers to get paint brushes in hand and put a primer coat of paint on the building which had been powerwashed in preparation for the Days of Caring.



Volunteers took a break and enjoyed old-fashioned s'mores around a outdoor fire pit.

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