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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fifth-graders Walk for a Month
Fourth Annual Sarah Noble Intermediate School 5th Grade Walking Project

New Milford, CT (April 9, 2010): The statistics are alarming, and United Way is responding. Childhood obesity is on the rise, and for the first time the expected life span of our children is shorter than their parents. Obesity has tripled in the past 2 decades, and according to the National Survey of Children's Health, approximately 27.3% of children ages 10 to 17 years in CT are considered overweight or obese. And locally, only 22%-54% of children in our school systems passed the state physical fitness test in 2007. United Way launched its Strong Heart initiative to help turn the tide of childhood obesity over the next five years in our region.

In New Milford, United Way is partnering with the **Sarah Noble Intermediate School to continue their fourth annual 5th Grade Walking Project**. A month long event, each 5th grade class partners with a community business and is challenged to increase their daily exercise. A pedometer measures the number of steps each child takes throughout their day, which is then recorded daily in a classroom log. Throughout the project month, prizes are awarded to classrooms that meet specific achievements. The goal of this business/school partnership is to mentor students toward a lifelong love of walking.

"The students look forward to this project every year and get very excited about the progress they make throughout the month," states **Dorothy Christman**, Public Relations Coordinator at New Milford Hospital and United Way council member.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) "Schools by themselves cannot, and should not be expected to address the nation's most serious health problems of obesity and sedentary lifestyle. The community and young people themselves must be systematically involved."

Pediatrician Diane D'Isidori, MD, an active member of the walking project, underscores "good health and achievement go hand in hand. Schools are now beginning to acknowledge they can no longer educate children effectively without recognizing the impact that health has on a child's ability to learn. The goal of the Walking Project is to support each student as they achieve their personal best

performance.”

Kick-off for the project is set for April 28, 2010.

Over 28 businesses and organizations were responsible for a successful project last year.

**For more information on the Walking Project please contact Ann Hartman @
860-355-4967.**

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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT

United Way of Western Connecticut's mission is: "To improve lives by mobilizing the power of caring communities to create lasting change". We work to advance the common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all. Working with many partners, United Way is focused on the building blocks that we need for a good life: a quality education that leads to a stable job, income that can support a family through retirement, and good health. The towns covered within UWWC's region are Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Sherman, Stamford, Warren and Washington. For more information about United Way of Western Connecticut, please visit: www.uwwesternct.org.