



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Relations & Photo Contact:
John DeWitt, Campaign Director
United Way of Franklin County, Inc.
413.772.2169 | jdewitt@uw-fc.org

Women's Way Sets Record for 'It's Blooming Backpacks' Collection

United Way women's group's fifth annual back-to-school drive collects 254 backpacks for Franklin County children – an increase of 104 more backpacks than donated in 2008

GREENFIELD, Mass., Aug. 27, 2009 – The United Way of Franklin County, Inc., today announced that the Women's Way's fifth annual "It's Blooming Backpacks" back-to-school drive collected a record-setting 254 backpacks filled with supplies, with a total value of more than \$19,000. This represents an increase of 104 backpacks over last year's donations.

"Even though these are hard economic times, the people who can help really want to help," said Linda K. Stacy, executive director of the United Way of Franklin County. "We've been hearing this and saying this often over the past few months – so it's wonderful to see that powerfully demonstrated by the record number of backpacks donated this year."

This year, the backpacks will be distributed to Franklin County children through Community Action Youth Programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County, and the United ARC Positive Parenting Program. Staff from these and other United Way partner agencies joined with the Women's Way group to celebrate the 2009 drive on Aug. 16, with 80 people bringing backpacks and attending an evening garden party at the home of Carole and Ted Pennock in Old Deerfield.

"I am so amazed by the generosity of the community – and by how many people show up for this event each year," said Carole Pennock, Women's Way member and administrator at The Bement School, who has hosted "It's



Above, 80 people attended the Aug. 16 "It's Blooming Backpacks" garden party in Old Deerfield; at right, party host Carole Pennock and United Way Executive Director Linda Stacy share a laugh; below, most of the 254 backpacks collected in a stack at the party.



Blooming Backpacks” each year since 2005. “Women’s Way is an amazing organization and it’s an honor to participate in such an outpouring of love and generosity to the children of Franklin County.”

Since the first annual “It’s Blooming Backpacks” event in 2005, Women’s Way’s members and volunteers have collected and donated a total of 866 supplies-filled back-to-school backpacks valued at nearly \$65,000 to Franklin County children and youth. This year’s collection was bolstered by the enthusiastic participation of numerous local businesses and organizations, including Yankee Candle Co., YMCA of Greenfield, Baystate Franklin Medical Center, WMECO, Greenfield Kiwanis Club, Virtus Investment Partners, and Rugg Manufacturing, among others.

About Women’s Way

Women’s Way, founded in 2005 by a group of United Way of Franklin County volunteers, is a network of women who are committed to strengthening the Franklin County community by using “our heads, hands, hearts, and handbags.” Women’s Way’s 50 members – along with more than 395 women who have participated in at least one event – have collected and donated to date a total of 866 backpacks valued at nearly \$65,000 to Franklin County children. More than \$121,000 of goods have been donated to Franklin county children and families to date, including the back-to-school backpacks as well as summer camperships, sneakers, boots, books, pajamas, gift cards, laundry baskets of household supplies, sweatshirts, slippers, band instruments, blankets, sleeping bags, and bags of food.

Women’s Way events for 2009-10 include the just completed “It’s Blooming Backpacks” Garden Party on Aug. 16 in Old Deerfield; the members only Annual Meeting (\$50 a year to join) on Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Greenfield Grille; “Sneaking Out for Kids” on Thursday, Oct. 29, at the Brandt House; “Supper for Six” on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2010, at Stoneleigh Burnham School in Greenfield; and “Thanks Mom!” at a Highland Ave. home on Thursday, April 19, 2010.

For more information, or to join Women’s Way, contact the United Way of Franklin County at 413.772.2168, info@uw-fc.org, or on the web at www.uw-fc.org.

About the United Way of Franklin County

United Way of Franklin County, Inc. was founded in 1938. From the original five agencies to its 24 current partners, for 71 years the United Way of Franklin County has addressed emerging needs and responded to donors to make the greatest impact on our community. Utilizing its endowment and approximately \$850,000 in funds raised in the past year, in its 2009-10 fiscal year beginning July 1, the United Way will distribute \$219,138 to programs and agencies that nurture children and youth; \$105,725 to strengthen families and individuals; \$108,863 to enhance the community’s health and wellness; and \$156,362 to care for those in crisis. The United Way’s 2009-10 campaign is led by Dan Kunhardt, board chair, and board member Kay Berenson; the executive director is Linda Stacy. To learn more, call 413.772.2168 or visit www.uw-fc.org.

