



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 11, 2010**

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## **United Way of Coastal Fairfield County Announces Neighbors Helping Neighbors Funding for Basic Needs**

**BRIDGEPORT, WESTPORT, NORWALK, CT. MARCH 11, 2010.** United Way of Coastal Fairfield County announced today that, through its partnership with the GE Foundation, it will be providing grant funding to organizations that offer basic needs services such as food, shelter and emergency relief. Unemployment remains high and individuals and families who never needed a helping hand continue to seek and need assistance. “Unfortunately we are still in very difficult and challenging economic times,” stated Merle Berke-Schlessel, Esq., President & CEO of United Way of Coastal Fairfield County. “Helping families and individuals meet their basic needs is one of our organization’s target issues and part of our work to increase the number of our residents who move to and remain financially stable.”

Last year, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County responded to the increased numbers of individuals and families in our communities who saw their financial stability shaken by reductions in work hours and/or job loss. The Neighbor2NeighborUnited partnership with GE Foundation and Catholic Charities provided over \$600,000 in grants to organizations to meet the surge in need. “Thanks to this infusion of financial support and the dedication of those on the front line, we know that thousands of additional meals were served and hundreds of individuals and families were able to remain in their homes, safe and with lights on,” stated Anne McCrory, Senior Attorney, Southern Connecticut Gas and United Way Board of Directors Chair.

With the goal of increasing the capacity of the safety net system in our area, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County will be accepting applications for grants to continue to assist organizations that serve their twelve town service area in the areas of emergency food, emergency housing and emergency relief (one-time expenses that threaten to put a family or individual in a crisis situation).



The *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* application can be found on United Way's website, [www.unitedwaycfc.org](http://www.unitedwaycfc.org). There will be one round of applications. The deadline for submitting an application is Friday, April 9. A committee of volunteers working on the financial stability initiatives will review applications. The goal is to complete the review process quickly with the expectation that the process will be complete by the end of May. Instructions for completing the application are also posted on the website. Questions regarding the application process should be directed to Cathy DeCesare, [cdecesare@unitedwaycfc.org](mailto:cdecesare@unitedwaycfc.org) or 203 339-6309 or Jim Crispino, [jcrispino@unitedwaycfc.org](mailto:jcrispino@unitedwaycfc.org) or 203 339-6319.

United Way of Coastal Fairfield County's mission is: "Together, we mobilize our communities to improve people's lives". Its vision is 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 all 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. United Way of Coastal Fairfield County serves the towns of Fairfield, Bridgeport, Stratford, Westport, Trumbull, Easton, Monroe, Weston, Norwalk, Wilton, Darien and New Canaan. Find out more at [www.unitedwaycfc.org](http://www.unitedwaycfc.org).

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