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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 18, 2009

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NEWS RELEASE

Junior Republic to Expand Education Program on Litchfield Campus

Litchfield, CT – John F. Boyd, Executive Director, recently announced that the Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR) recently received approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) to expand the capacity of the private special education program conducted on its Litchfield campus. As a result of this approval, CJR may provide educational programming for up to 20 students. CJR closed its DCF residential treatment program at the beginning of April and has been gradually expanding the existing special, vocational and alternative education programs, as well as transitional services, on its Litchfield campus since that time.

Conducted in the Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center, these programs currently serve students between 12 and 21 years of age. A total of 15 boys are currently enrolled and have been referred from public schools throughout western Connecticut, including Region 1 (Canaan, Falls Village, Kent, Salisbury and Sharon), Region 12 (Bridgewater, New Preston, Roxbury and Washington), New Milford, Oxford, Thomaston and Torrington. Several student referrals are pending from other towns and communities in the region.

Mr. Boyd indicated that the Junior Republic plans to further develop its private special education program. “This decision was made based on the level of interest expressed by the region’s special education directors,” he stated. “There is a tremendous need for special, vocational and alternative education programs, as well as transitional services for students,” he continued. “We want to offer schools a range of quality special, vocational and alternative education services in an environment that nurtures and supports special needs youth as well as those who are at-risk of chronic difficulties in their homes, schools and communities,” he said. Mr. Boyd noted that school teachers and administrators in the region welcome the development of programs closer to local schools and students’ communities as transporting youth long distances for special education services is both costly and difficult to coordinate.

“I feel that this is a wonderful educational opportunity for students in Litchfield and surrounding counties who are struggling to be successful in their large, public home schools,” said Linda Carabis, Director of Special Services for Regional School District # 10. “An approved special education program in Litchfield for struggling public school students is optimal, especially with CJR’s long and reputable history,” she noted.

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Other education professionals in western Connecticut have also responded with enthusiasm to the services now being provided in the Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center at the Junior Republic.

“I was excited to hear about the new direction that CJR is undertaking,” said Paula Gladu-Morabito, Executive Director of Shared Services for Region 7 (Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Norfolk, and New Hartford). “Many times, when faced with finding an appropriate outside program for students, we find that the commute is just too far, or that local programs are full,” she reported. “CJR’s new program allows us another option to explore as we strive to find the most appropriate programming for all our students,” stated Gladu-Morabito

Special, alternative and vocational education programs, as well as transitional services, are provided for boys through the Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center on CJR’s Litchfield campus. Approved by the State of Connecticut’s Department of Education to provide private special education, the Cable Education Center is a candidate for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and it is anticipated that the site visit for full accreditation will be conducted in 2010.

The education program at the Junior Republic is individualized to meet the needs and foster the interests of participating youth. All students receive instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science (including a laboratory component), and social studies, on a daily basis. Technology skills are introduced, applied and reinforced in the academic setting by integrating the computer and academic curricula. Students attend physical education and wellness, and art and music classes on a weekly basis.

All students enroll in a vocational course of study at CJR. Every boy is expected to develop a theoretical base for the course content and to apply that knowledge through practical application in and out of the classroom setting. Each student develops and maintains a vocational portfolio, which integrates his skills in a given trade, in reading and writing, mathematics and independent living skills. These portfolios of student work also serve as a dynamic record of each boy’s accomplishments, and document his progress in integrating academic and vocational skills. Vocational classes currently include plant and animal science, conducted on CJR’s working farm; graphic arts, which includes practical experience in a busy, production oriented print shop; and building design and drafting. Based upon identified need, students meet regularly with a licensed clinical social worker as well as a speech therapist.

Transitional services provide students a practical, experiential learning opportunity that includes community participation and reinforces work maturity and job readiness skills. Students receive guidance and support as they make decisions regarding their post-secondary educational and vocational pursuits. Transitional services are critical to helping students develop independent living skills and successfully re-acclimate to their public schools and communities.

CJR Executive Director John Boyd noted that in addition to the special, vocational and alternative education programs being offered in the Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center, the Junior Republic is continuing to explore other programs for its Litchfield campus that are consistent with CJR’s mission to serve at-risk and special needs children, youth and families. He mentioned that CJR is collaborating with WAMOGO High School to allow its vocational agriculture

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students to use the Junior Republic's farm for required practical experience. Three students who are members of the Litchfield County 4-H Beef Club or students in WAMOGO's agriculture program will be participating on the CJR Beef Cattle Show Team.

“Especially during these economic times, families and students need to have the support of specialized programs such as those provided by the Connecticut Junior Republic,” stated Judith Palmer, Ed.D, Superintendent of the Oxford Public Schools. “Our collaborations with the Junior Republic have met with great success,” she continued. “Individual public schools cannot sustain the cost of providing resources to sustain vocational training programs.”

Founded in 1904 through the bequest of Litchfield resident, Mary Buel, the Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR) has provided residential and community-based care, treatment and education programs for troubled and at-risk young people for more than 100 years. Today, the organization's combined programs serve nearly 1,000 boys and girls from communities throughout Connecticut. CJR operates group homes for boys in East Hartford and Winchester; the Center for Assessment, Respite and Enrichment (CARE), a short term-residential program for girls in Waterbury; and community-based programs serving boys, girls and families in the Danbury, Torrington/Northwest Connecticut and Greater Waterbury regions.

A private charitable organization, the Connecticut Junior Republic is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). CJR is supported by contributions from individuals, businesses and organizations, and through fees for services funded by the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), and by Connecticut's public schools. For further information, please contact Hedy Barton, Director of Development and Public Relations: (860) 567-9423; or by email: hbarton@cjryouth.org.