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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
January 30, 2009

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Connecticut Junior Republic Announces Plans to Close Residential Program in Litchfield**

Litchfield, CT – Today the Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR) announced that its 60-bed Litchfield (DCF) residential program will close on April 2. Agency officials stressed that the closure relates only to the residential treatment program on the Litchfield campus. CJR’s community-based programs in Danbury, Torrington and Waterbury, and group homes in East Hartford and Winchester continue to operate and provide services for nearly 1,000 youngsters and families annually. CJR’s administrative offices will remain in Litchfield.

In making this announcement, John F. Boyd, executive director and Charles E. Roraback, president of the Board of Directors, stated that the closure of the residential program is unavoidable and due to a profound downturn in the number of student referrals, as well as the higher risk, behaviorally complex population currently being referred for treatment.

“The youth that CJR has served so effectively for many years are now being treated in community-based programs,” stated Mr. Boyd. “Only youth that present higher risk behaviors are being referred by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Juvenile Courts for long-term residential treatment,” he continued. “This is consistent with prevailing state and national trends that favor working with troubled youngsters in their homes and communities,” he explained. More than 80 percent of the approximately 1,000 boys and girls that CJR will serve this year will be treated in its community-based programs and group homes and it is anticipated that demand for these services will grow.

Mr. Boyd indicated that the Junior Republic will work closely with DCF in thoughtfully transitioning the approximately 40 students currently in residence at the Litchfield program to alternative placements. “Closure of our residential program is devastating to all involved, as 107 members of the staff will lose their jobs as the result of this measure,” he continued. “The Board of Directors has considered all options, and this action is one that we have tried very hard to avoid for some time.”

Mr. Roraback indicated that the Junior Republic will be exploring, in a comprehensive and deliberate fashion, how the Litchfield campus can be best-used to fulfill the organization’s mission to provide care, treatment, education and family services to help young people become productive and contributing members of their communities.

He cited the growth of services provided by the Junior Republic's community programs in Waterbury, which served 600 boys and girls last year and opened a new Family Support Center last May that is anticipated to help 150 to 200 youngsters and families in addition to those already served in this location.

"Our organization has been embraced by the community since Miss Mary Buel of Litchfield left her farmhouse, land and funds to create a haven for wayward and troubled children in 1904," stated Mr. Boyd. "Since these early beginnings, our program has grown and diversified, and CJR has adapted to many changes in the way services are provided. The involvement of individuals, foundations and businesses throughout Connecticut has helped CJR meet many challenges in the past, and emerge as a stronger organization," he continued. Mr. Boyd cited, in particular, the important support of the Litchfield Aid of CJR. A group of approximately 150 women from Litchfield and surrounding communities, the Aid was established in 1911 for the sole purpose of raising funds and public awareness to assist the Junior Republic in its mission of care for troubled youngsters throughout Connecticut. The Aid holds an annual tour of Litchfield homes in July to benefit the Junior Republic and 2009 marks the 62<sup>nd</sup> year of this event. "CJR will continue to appreciate the invaluable support of the Litchfield Aid and its many other generous friends and supporters, as we transition our focus to new programs and services," he stated.

Mr. Boyd noted that whenever possible, the Junior Republic has shared its Litchfield facilities and resources with the community. Litchfield and Wamogo Public High Schools currently use CJR's pool for practice and swim meets. The Connecticut Junior Republic's 150-acre campus includes a state of the art academic and vocational education center, a family services center, a gymnasium and pool complex, a working farm, as well as 7 cottages, and a dining room facility. Since 1904, Junior Republic has served thousands of at-risk and troubled boys in this location and has been one of Litchfield's largest employers. For many years, the licensed bed capacity on the Litchfield campus was 84 boys and an additional 10 boys were served through day education. In 2008, the licensed bed capacity was reduced to 60 students, due to the downturn in referrals as well as the complex behavioral issues of the youth being referred for treatment.

"Over the past two years, the Connecticut Junior Republic board members and staff have worked heroically to overcome a combination of forces, including a crippled economy and a strong national policy trend that supports working with troubled youths in their homes and communities, and in group home settings," stated Mr. Roraback. "Closing the residential program has been a very difficult and painful decision but one that has been made to safeguard the best interests of the students who are entrusted to our care, and those of the staff that works with these young men on a daily basis," he continued. "We have looked at every alternative and cannot find a way to sustain a residential program in this setting in a safe or meaningful way for the youth population that is being referred to CJR," said Mr. Roraback.

A private charitable organization, the Connecticut Junior Republic is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA) and by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE). CJR is supported by contributions from individuals, businesses and organizations, and through services funded by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, 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](mailto:hbarton@cjryouth.org).