



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 2009

Media Contact: Chris George

Phone: (203) 562-2095

Fax: (203) 562-1798

cgeorge@irisct.org

IRIS Awarded \$18,860 Grant from United Way of Greater New Haven to Provide Employment Support to Refugees

New Haven, CT- IRIS—Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services has been awarded a continuation grant of \$18,860 from United Way of Greater New Haven for its program, Employment Support through Family Literacy. With this funding, IRIS assists refugees and asylees—new Americans—to learn English and connect with other immigrants, and provides them with employment services. It has also made it possible for the agency to reach out to area employers and forge partnerships with other area non-profit agencies, including STRIVE New Haven.

“Because government funds for resettlement last just a few months after refugee families arrive in the U.S., the United Way funding is important to improve IRIS’ ability to promote family literacy, employability and assist refugee families to integrate earlier and more thoroughly into the mainstream of American life,” says Chris George, the executive director of IRIS.

Area employers who hire refugees are usually pleasantly surprised by the dedication of their new employees, the strength of their work ethic and the speed with which they pick up their new duties. However, it is only because of the foresight of funding agencies like the United Way that IRIS is able to reach out to new employers and provide ongoing employment and literacy services to refugee families.

About IRIS:

The mission of IRIS is to help refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, regain hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut's communities. IRIS—which began welcoming refugees in 1982—currently resettles approximately 120 refugees each year, and provides case management, acculturation assistance, basic needs such as food and housing, academic support for children, English lessons, job training and placement, and financial literacy training.

For more information about IRIS, please go online to www.irisct.org, or contact Chris George at (203) 562-2095 or cgeorge@irisct.org.

About United Way:

About United Way: United Way brings together the caring power of people to create change in our region and to improve lives. We strive to be a catalyst for identifying community needs and opportunities for change; to focus on specific community priority areas and initiatives through which we have the best opportunities to improve lives and change conditions; and to engage donors, organizations and community leaders to improve the social and civic health of our region.

More information about United Way’s work to improve lives and communities can be found at www.uwqnh.org.