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The Courage to Speak Foundation, Inc.

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The Connecticut Association of Schools Honors Ginger Katz with 2010 *Distinguished Friend of Education Award*

(Norwalk, CT, March 25, 2010)....The Connecticut Association of Schools has named Ginger Katz, founder and CEO of the Norwalk-based Courage to Speak Foundation, as the recipient of its 2010 *Distinguished Friend of Education Award*. The award is given annually to an individual outside the field of education who has made strong contributions to public education at the local, state, regional, or national level.

Ms. Katz received her award at the annual “Courage to Speak Empowering Youth to be Drug Free Family Night” held on Thursday, March 18, at West Rocks Middle School in Norwalk. She was nominated for the award—the most prestigious award given by the association to persons not directly involved in public education—by David Hay and Lynne Moore, the principals of Brookside Elementary School and West Rocks Middle School, respectively.

According to Dr. V. Everett Lyons, Chair of the Awards and Recognition Committee of the Connecticut Association of Schools, “As evidenced by the impressive nomination submitted by Principals Hay and Moore, Ms. Katz has made a heroic personal investment in building the ‘Courage to Speak’ Foundation. Her selfless dedication to preventing adolescent alcohol and drug use has impacted hundreds—if not thousands—of children and family members.”

Ginger and Larry Katz founded the Courage to Speak Foundation in 1996, shortly after they lost their son, Ian, to a drug overdose. Its mission is to save lives by empowering youth to live drug free and by encouraging parents to communicate effectively with their children about dangers of drugs.

“After Ian’s death, a well-meaning but misguided physician suggested we could shield our family from more pain by publicly calling the cause of death a brain aneurysm,” recalls Ginger. “I refused to do that. Having seen firsthand the devastating reality of Ian’s addiction, I knew that denial plays an important role in the lives of young people using alcohol and drugs.”

Instead she and her husband, Larry, chose to speak out and share the pain of their horrific loss to prevent the same tragedy from happening in other families. Since that time, Ginger has made over 1,000 presentations to students ranging in age from elementary to high school. Unlike other drug and alcohol education programs, however, this one derives its impact not through statistics or “scare tactics,” but through Ginger’s ability to share her experiences in a direct and personal way, one that makes young audience members identify with him and with the pain his addiction caused him and his family.

To sustain and grow her impassioned message, Ginger developed the *Courage To Speak Drug Prevention Education Curricula* for elementary, middle and high schools. Her book, *Sunny’s Story*, tells of Ian’s life and death through the eyes of the family beagle, and is a popular program supplement among students. So that parents could understand what their children are facing, Ginger spearheaded development of a parallel program, *Courage to Speak - Courageous Parenting 101*. Through the Courage To Speak website, referral help-line, support groups and annual Courage to Speak Family Night, Ginger’s initiatives are dedicated to saving young lives by transforming families and communities and educating young people and their parents of the devastating effects of drug abuse.

For more information about the Courage to Speak Foundation, visit www.couragetospeak.org.

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