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Website Launched to Help Rebuild and Restart Classrooms Across Newtown

Giving One More Gift During this Holiday Season Will Support Newtown Teachers and Their Students

Hartford, CT—A coalition of education leaders joined in the announcement of the creation of a donation website, DonorsChoose.org/Newtown, dedicated to supporting the classroom efforts of teachers in Newtown, Connecticut.

Contributions received through DonorsChoose.org/Newtown will give Newtown teachers the ability to design and fund classroom-specific projects and to buy needed materials. Projects could include, for example, books and shelves for a reading nook, art supplies for a mosaic, seeds and soil for a memorial garden, or other teacher-generated projects.

The goal of this effort is to enable Connecticut residents – and individuals throughout the United States – to offer a holiday gift of any size to the teachers of Newtown and, through them, to the district’s students.

A coalition of Connecticut, national, and Newtown education leaders praised this effort. The leaders explained that they are working together on multiple fronts – and with the help of a number of key nonprofit partners – in order to assist the Newtown school district (including its educators, students, and families) in the wake of the recent tragedy.

Charles Best, founder of DonorsChoose.org stated: "At DonorsChoose.org, we believe that great teachers know best what their students need, and this is surely the case in Newtown. We're honored and humbled to provide a platform for supporting these educators."

Commissioner Stefan Pryor said: "The selfless spirit of the teaching profession is currently on display throughout the Newtown school district. In the face of profound personal grief, anxiety, and challenge, these educators inspire us with their strength, resiliency, and perseverance." Commissioner Pryor continued, "The teachers of Newtown know the needs of their students best. We hope that efforts such as this will aid Newtown educators—modestly but meaningfully — as they return to and restart their classrooms."

“While the road to recovery will be long, we know that the children, educators and community of Newtown will move forward. This partnership with DonorsChoose allows Americans across the country to share in the healing process by lending a helping hand where it is needed most,” said American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten. “In this season that usually fills children and adults of all ages with joy and hope, the AFT is pleased to be part of the healing process for their schools and their lives.”

Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education said: “The six courageous educators lost at Sandy Hook were heroes in the truest sense even before they laid down their lives to protect their students. In the simple and profound choice to teach, they each demonstrated the selfless, quiet, extraordinary heroism that defines the teaching profession. To honor their memory, people may wish to support this or other responsible efforts in support of the ongoing work, dedication and commitment of their colleagues in Newtown at this difficult time.”

“DonorsChoose.org is a wonderful way to support the teachers of Newtown,” said Melodie Peters, president of AFT Connecticut. “By donating on this website people can help our teachers meet their students' needs during this difficult time.”

“The outpouring of support bestowed on the Newtown community over the past week has been overwhelming,” said Newtown Superintendent of Schools Janet Robinson. “We are immensely grateful for this opportunity for donations to be directed straight into the classrooms to support the courageous and inspiring work of Newtown’s teachers.”

“It is my great honor to represent the teachers of Newtown, who continue to inspire me daily,” said Tom Kuroski, president of the Newtown Federation of Teachers. “By virtue of their courage and deep love for teaching our students, they are returning to the classrooms after unspeakable horrors unfolded in one of our schools. As we grieve and continue the work of supporting one another during this difficult time, we are grateful for these contributions that will help our teachers create the learning, enriching and caring environments for their students that they seek to provide.”

The parent organization, DonorsChoose.org, was founded in 2000 and, to date, has funded over 328,000 projects proposed by over 137,000 teachers in over 46,000 schools nationwide.

The money raised by DonorsChoose.org will be divided equally among teachers in Newtown. Each teacher may use his or her allocated funds to purchase classroom materials, fund a classroom-specific project, or use the funds as an opportunity to demonstrate the act of giving by donating portions of their funds to other classroom projects throughout Connecticut and/or nationwide.

Donors can give any amount towards classroom funding credits or a specific teacher-developed project that most inspires them. The community site will be live for six months, through June 30, 2013. However, any individually developed project can remain on the site for up to five months from the date on which it was created.

DonorsChoose.org vets every classroom project request, purchases the materials and ships them directly to the classroom, provides photos of the project-taking place, and supplies a cost report showing how every dollar was spent. As a 501(c) 3 charity, donations through DonorsChoose.org are tax-deductible.

To visit the website: <http://www.donorschoose.org/newtown>

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