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United Way of
Chittenden County
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United Way of Chittenden County's Women's Leadership Council Awards \$25,000 Grant to Mercy Connections Women's Small Business Program

APRIL 13, 2015 (South Burlington VT): United Way of Chittenden County's Women's Leadership Council awarded a \$25,000 grant to Mercy Connections' Women's Small Business Program Account-able LIFE Initiative, which will provide financial coaching, mentoring and peer groups that cultivate financial empowerment through gender-sensitive coursework and activities designed to help women make informed, proactive money management decisions. The United Way Women's Leadership Council was formed in early 2015 by a Steering Committee of 22 local female leaders and volunteers who believe in the power of women and their ability to catalyze social change through philanthropy, volunteerism and advocacy.

The Women's Leadership Council chose to focus their efforts on improving women's financial stability – a topic within United Way's focus on community betterment through improving Education, Income and Health. **"In Vermont, below-average incomes and the high cost of living create few opportunities for struggling women to rise above the poverty line, especially those with families and single mothers. Eighty-one percent of single mother households and 46% of married couples with children, make too little to meet their basic needs,"** said Council Steering Committee Member Co-Chair, Michell Langlais. **"We're energized by our tremendous potential to help transform our community and support the financial stability and independence of women."**

In February 2015, the United Way of Chittenden County's Women's Leadership Council issued a request for proposals for programs and services with potential to improve income stability strategic change in education and skill development, family resources and supports, and financial literacy. To raise funds to support the chosen proposal and further community education about the issue, the Council sought membership, private donations and hosted a silent auction and event on March 18 featuring a keynote presentation by Anne Mosle of the Aspen Institute, who spoke about how to build an inter-generational cycle for opportunity for women and their families.

At the March 18 event, United Way of Chittenden County Executive Director, Martha Maksym, awarded the grant to Mercy Connections' Women's Small Business Program Account-able LIFE Initiative, a financial empowerment program that helps women find hope, clarity, and support in their personal financial life – whatever it may be. The initiative includes a 7-week Personal Financial Empowerment class, and additionally a new offering of regular one-on-one and group Financial Coaching, and specialized Personal Finance 101 workshops. Women find the support and resources they need to make informed decisions about their money and resources. **"We're thrilled to be partnering with United Way of Chittenden County on this important issue. This gives us an opportunity to add a creative, new class to our portfolio of offerings,"** said Mercy Connections Executive Director, Dolly Fleming.

ABOUT UNITED WAY OF CHITTENDEN COUNTY

United Way of Chittenden County unites our whole community to solve complex problems and harness the power of people to create a stronger Chittenden County. United Way convenes advocates, organizations and institutions to address the community's most pressing issues, focusing on the building blocks of a vibrant community: Education, Income and Health. The problems facing our community are complex; they are issues that no single organization or individual alone can solve – real change is possible when nonprofit, public and private sectors work together. United Way has the networks, partnerships and strategic initiatives to improve the lives of our family, friends and neighbors.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.unitedwaycc.org.

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For information about Mercy Connections, contact: Marissa Stayer Benton at 802-846-7083 or mstrayerbenton@mercyconnections.org. See attached PHOTO: UW_women-72.tif – Dolly Fleming accepts the grant at the Women's Leadership Council event on March 18, 2015.