December 17, 2012

To: West Haven Community House Staff, Families, and friends

No words can express the deep sadness that we all feel about the tragic events that transpired in Newtown last Friday. Nor are there words or an ability to comprehend the pain a parent feels when losing a child so young and under such horrific conditions.

Along with the rest of the state and the nation, we extend our most sincere condolences to the families of the children and to the families of the heroes who were their teachers and to the entire Newtown community who will live with this pain for decades to come.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reassure you all that the safety, security and wellbeing of our children, clients and staff is always of the utmost importance to us at the West Haven Community House. Over the years we have been able to install some electronic security devices, cameras and other technological measures to keep our agency safe and secure. We have ongoing plans to increase our security measures, adding new cameras and other locking devices. We ask for your patience and cooperation as we diligently work towards the swift completion of this project. We ask that you respect and comply with any security regulations we establish and to please be flexible as we tryout each step.

For those of you who have children in our Head Start program, we want to assure you that we have been proactive in continuing our plans for enhanced security on our access doors and are in the process of finding funding for these additional security measures. We ask all of our Head Start parents to be vigilant, pay particular attention to and report to us any suspicious individuals and or packages, and to cooperate and comply with all the safety and security measures that we adopt.

For those of you who may have children in our School age programs, you can be assured that we comply with all board of education and school policies and practices in keeping the premises locked, utilizing the approved school security measures. It is extremely important that all parents/staff follow the school security procedures and never prop a door open or allow someone that you do not know into the school once you have been allowed admittance. We have been informed that the school system will be initiating more stringent safety measures which we will comply with and will expect our families to also follow.

Our Community Connections building on Campbell Avenue does have a security alarm system and keeps all exterior doors locked, with the exception of the main door to our reception area. We will be researching funding to install a more restrictive system on that door. However, I can reassure you that we are very vigilant in our monitoring of the facility, paying close attention to access to visitors. And all of our residential homes have security alarms installed.

For staff, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the work you do with our clients and children and know that you all are also very concerned about keeping our children and clients safe. I ask for all of you to think about issues or concerns you may have about the safety of your workspace and/or the agency and to please share those ideas with your supervisors. We will be reconvening our Emergency Preparedness Committee in January and all of your ideas, input and participation in this committee is most welcome and needed.

This is a terrible and terrifying tragedy that we all hope and pray never happens again. I ask that we all pledge to work together to keep ourselves, our children, our clients and our family members safe. Thank you.

Patricia Stevens
Executive Director