



# TOWN OF STRATFORD

## News Release

For Immediate Release  
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*Stratford, Connecticut* – Mayor John A. Harkins and three other chief executives have issued the *Mayors' Mentoring Challenge* to encourage residents to support area children and young people by becoming a mentor.

The *Mayors' Mentoring Challenge* was formally unveiled on January 16<sup>th</sup>, midway through National Mentoring Month, at the annual Mentor Appreciation Dinner hosted by the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County.

The *Challenge* was the brainchild of Mayor Harkins' wife, Jody, who has been working with UWCFC to engage more public officials and residents in mentoring. It is believed to be the first mentoring initiative of its kind in Connecticut.

The *Challenge* was issued by Mayor Harkins, Norwalk Mayor Richard Moscia, Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch, and Trumbull First Selectman Tim Herbst, inviting other chief executives in the UWCFC 12-town region to become mentors themselves and to help recruit 500 new mentors in Coastal Fairfield County this year. Mayor Harkins has mentored a Stratford student since 2009 and, since then, the number of school-based mentors in Stratford has tripled.

“My wife, Jody, an elementary school teacher, was an important influence on my decision to mentor,” Mayor Harkins said. “Jody also has encouraged others to step up and participate as a mentor”, whether in the school-based program or through other mentoring opportunities.

“It's so rewarding to mentor a child or young person. Every week, I meet with my mentee at Second Hill Lane Elementary School to talk about school, about challenges, about anything that comes up,” Mayor Harkins said.

“Giving this young man my support, encouragement and guidance has meant the world to me. And I think it helps my mentee to know that I believe in him, and that I want to see him reach his fullest potential.”

Mayor Harkins noted that there are many ways to be a mentor, including a new Wi-Mentor program offered through United Way. “I strongly encourage everyone to become mentors, and make a difference in the lives of our young people,” he said

For more information about the *Mayors’ Mentoring Challenge*, please see [www.unitedwaycfc.org/mayorschallenge](http://www.unitedwaycfc.org/mayorschallenge). For details about an upcoming training and information session on March 1, 2013 for the school-based mentoring program in Stratford, please contact [hewittc@stratfordk12.org](mailto:hewittc@stratfordk12.org) or [christianod@stratfordk12.org](mailto:christianod@stratfordk12.org).