



**NEWS RELEASE
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High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc. named *Champion in Action* in youth initiatives category

Nonprofit agency receives unrestricted \$35,000 grant, PR and volunteer support

New London, CT – Earlier today, Citizens Bank and WTNH News 8 named High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc. in Old Lyme the first 2012 *Champion in Action*[®] in the category of youth initiatives. High Hopes will receive a \$35,000 unrestricted grant, media coverage, and extensive promotional and volunteer support for its outstanding work.

The grant will help grow High Hopes' therapeutic horseback riding programs and provide scholarships to youth needing financial assistance. "Citizens Bank is pleased to name High Hopes Therapeutic Riding the newest *Champion in Action* in the youth initiative category," said Ned Handy, President, Citizens Bank, Rhode Island and Connecticut. "This award will help High Hopes continue to offer young adults with cognitive, physical and emotional disabilities a range of therapeutic services that cannot be duplicated in an office or hospital setting."

"News 8 is proud to recognize High Hopes Therapeutic Riding for its unique environment of support that fosters critical skill-building for individuals facing a wide array of daily challenges," said Mary Lee Weber, Regional Development Specialist at WTNH News 8. "Through its programs, youths gain peer support and life-long problem-solving, recreational and educational opportunities. We are pleased to name it a *Champion in Action*."

Launched in 2002, *Champions in Action* is a joint initiative of Citizens Bank and News 8 to recognize and support nonprofit organizations for their contributions to Connecticut communities. 2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the program, which has awarded 38 Connecticut nonprofits nearly \$1 million in grants and promotional support.

High Hopes Therapeutic Riding provides a wide array of educational programs, including:

- Summer Horse Sense Camp, an educational outreach program that targets New London youth grades 5-8 and provides activities that explore respect, cooperation, leadership skills and community building;
- therapeutic riding lesson programs modeled after those of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). Therapeutic riding lessons are planned with the individual's educational, physical, social and recreational goals in mind.

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As a *Champion in Action*, High Hopes Therapeutic Riding will receive:

- a \$35,000 contribution in unrestricted funds from the Citizens Charitable Foundation;
- media coverage from News 8, including public service announcements and television profiles over the course of six months;
- volunteer support from Citizens and News 8 colleagues;
- the opportunity for the organization's executive director to participate in a "president-to-president" mentorship with Citizens Bank of Rhode Island and Connecticut President Ned Handy;
- extensive public relations support;
- promotional support highlighting the *Champion in Action* in all Citizens Bank branch DCN screens and on its ATMs; and
- exposure on both Citizens Bank and News 8 websites.

"It is a tremendous honor for our organization to be selected as a Champion in Action," said Kitty Stalsburg, executive director of High Hopes Therapeutic Riding. "High Hopes is committed to offering the healing benefits of equine-assisted therapies and activities, regardless of financial means. This award will help us continue our mission of reaching youth based on therapeutic need rather than ability to pay."

Applications for the second 2012 *Champion in Action* in the neighborhood revitalization category are due Friday, March 2, at 5 p.m. The winner will be announced in July. Eligible nonprofits should apply online at www.citizensbank.com/community/champions.

Prior Connecticut Champions in Action include: AIDS Project of New Haven, New Haven Christian Community Action of New Haven, Oddfellows Playhouse of Middletown, Alderhouse Residential Communities of Middletown, New London Community Meal Center of New London, Marrakech Day Services of Woodbridge, Women's Center of Southeastern CT, of New London, Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities of New London, Hispanos Unidos of New Haven, Centro de la Comunidad, Inc. of New London, AMISTAD America of New Haven, Junta for Progressive Action, Inc. of New Haven, Broad-Park Development Corporation of Hartford, LEAP of New Haven, North End Action Team (NEAT) of Middletown, Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen of New Haven, The Open Hearth of Hartford, Mercy Housing & Shelter of Hartford, New Haven Home Recovery of New Haven, My Sisters Place of Hartford, The Center for Women and Families of Bridgeport, Martin House of Norwich, Urban League of Greater Hartford of Hartford Youth Rights Media of New Haven, The Diaper Bank of New Haven, Guakia, Inc. of Hartford, Mutual Housing Association of Southwestern CT, Stamford, Co-opportunity, Inc. of Hartford, Women's Business Development Council Inc. of Stamford, Fellowship Place, Inc. of New Haven, Connecticut Association for Human Services of Hartford, Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, Bridgeport, New Neighborhoods of Stamford, Hartford Economic Development Corporation (HEDCO) of Hartford, The Community Farm of Simsbury, Simsbury, All Our Kin, Inc of New Haven, Operation Hope of Fairfield, Inc., Fairfield.

For more information about the Citizens Bank / News 8 10 *Champions in Action* program, visit www.citizensbank.com/community/champions or www.wtnh.com. To learn more about how to contribute to High Hopes Therapeutic Riding through donations or volunteerism, call 860.434.1974 or visit www.highhopestr.org.

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About Citizens Bank

Citizens Bank is a division of RBS Citizens, N.A., operating its seven-state branch network in Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. It has 51 branches and 131 ATMs in Connecticut.

RBS Citizens, N.A., is a subsidiary of Citizens Financial Group, Inc., a \$131 billion commercial bank holding company. It is headquartered in Providence, R.I., and, through its subsidiaries, has more than 1,500 branches, approximately 3,900 ATMs and more than 20,000 colleagues. Its two bank subsidiaries are RBS Citizens, N.A. and Citizens Bank of Pennsylvania. They operate a 12-state branch network under the Citizens Bank brand in Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont, and the Charter One brand in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. CFG has non-branch retail and commercial offices in more than 30 states. CFG is owned by RBS (the Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc). CFG's website is citizensbank.com.

About WTNH News 8

WTNH News 8 continues to set the standard for news coverage excellence in Connecticut. News 8 provides news, weather and information around the clock through its television newscasts, WTNH.com website and through its digital and mobile platforms. WTNH News 8, an ABC affiliate, and WCTX MyTV9, a My Network affiliate, serve more than 871,000* households.

*Estimate according to Connecticut Nielsen Station Index (NSI).

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