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Award-Winning Author and Social Entrepreneur Challenges Community Leaders to Embrace New Technology

West Hartford, CT – Allison H. Fine, a social entrepreneur and award-winning author, proclaimed the social media revolution to a crowd of community leaders at Saint Joseph College on Thursday evening. At a keynote address and panel discussion presented by United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and sponsored by *TRAVELERS*, Fine shed light on a wide array of digital tools that allow instant two-way communication with large groups of people and she challenged local nonprofit organizations and socially conscious individuals to use these tools to advance causes they care about.

Social media tools such as email, cell phones, wikis, Twitter, and Youtube represent not an evolution but a revolution in communication, said Fine. Because they allow a two-way conversation, the new tools “push power out” from organizations to the individuals that support them, enabling individuals to mobilize and organize mass events more quickly and on a larger scale than ever before. “Try them yourselves,” Fine urged. “Don’t leave it to your assistant or an intern.... We have a generation gap that needs to be closed on social media; everyone needs to connect in order for causes to be successful.”

Because they break down “silos” and encourage grassroots collaboration, social media present both a challenge and an opportunity for traditional nonprofit organizations, Fine said. “It’s too early to tell,” Fine noted, whether the most popular forms of social media will stay in business over the long term, but she implored the audience not to overlook their tremendous potential. Fine explained the significance of social media in detail in her 2006 book *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*, winner of the Terry McAdams National Book Award.

Fine’s keynote address was followed by a panel discussion with participants representing a cross-section of the greater Hartford business, nonprofit, and higher education communities. Panelists included Allison H. Fine; Paul Pita, Principal and Creative Director of Pita Communications in Rocky Hill, who serves on the Board of Directors of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; Bob Rath, President and Chief Executive Officer of Our Piece of the Pie, a Hartford-based nonprofit organization that helps young people ages 14 to 24 achieve education and employment goals; and Michelle M. Stronz, Ed.D., Director of Undergraduate Business Programs and Assistant Professor of Business Administration at Saint Joseph College. Anita Ford Saunders of Anita Ford Saunders Communication, a 30-year public relations veteran, served as moderator.

“Allison Fine has given us tremendous food for thought,” said Susan B. Dunn, President and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. “Social media helps us create a network of those who care about community and want to participate in making change,” Dunn added.

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (UWCNCT) is a nonprofit organization that has been meeting human care needs in a 40-town area for more than 80 years. With its network of partner agencies, volunteers and community leaders, UWCNCT works to ensure children are successful, families are financially stable and that there is a safety net of services for those in need.

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PHOTOS BY ALAN GRANT

[PHOTO AF-010]

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut presented a keynote address and panel discussion with author and social entrepreneur Allison H. Fine at Saint Joseph College on Thursday evening. The event was sponsored by TRAVELERS. Participants from left to right: Bob Rath, President and Chief Executive Officer of Hartford-based youth nonprofit Our Piece of the Pie; Allison H. Fine; Paul Pita, Principal and Creative Director of Pita Communications in Rocky Hill, who serves on the Board of Directors of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; Michelle M. Stronz, Ed.D., Director of Undergraduate Business Programs and Assistant Professor of Business Administration at Saint Joseph College; and moderator Anita Ford Saunders of Anita Ford Saunders Communication.

[PHOTO AF-017]

Author and social entrepreneur Allison H. Fine (left) was joined by Pamela Trotman Reid, Ph.D., President of Saint Joseph College (center) and Susan B. Dunn, President and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (right) at a keynote address and reception held Thursday evening at Saint Joseph College.

[PHOTO AF-114]

Allison H. Fine, a social entrepreneur and author of the award-winning 2006 book *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*, explained the power of social media to a group of community leaders at Saint Joseph College Thursday night. The event was presented by United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and sponsored by TRAVELERS.