



MEDIA RELEASE
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**31st Court Services Unit Food Basket Drive to be
Honored with *Community Service Award* at
National Counseling Group's National Conference in Richmond**

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***Prince William Co. Program that Provides Holiday Meals to Needy Families Recognized;
Featured at Event Celebrating Public-Private Partnerships in the Mental Health Arena***

Richmond, Va. – The 31st Court Services Unit (CSU) Food Basket Drive will be honored with a *Community Service Award* at the National Counseling Group's Second National Conference, which will take place on Thursday, May 1, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Greater Richmond Convention Center (403 North Third Street, Richmond, Va.). Representatives Ellen Patterson, James Rankin, Lynn Dotson and Lester Leonard will be recognized for their efforts to provide holiday meals to more than 73 needy families in 2007 in Prince William County, growing from just six families 34 years ago when the program began.

While none of the participants claim coming up with the original idea to start the program, they recall a series of conversations in 1973 between Mr. Rankin, who at that time was a Parole Officer, and a "softball buddy," Mr. Leonard, who at that time worked as a grocery store manager, that led to help a few families in need to enjoy a special holiday dinner that year. At the time, the CSU staff consisted of five probation officers, who personally opened their wallets and collected money for groceries, which were delivered to six of their most needy families.

Now, 34 years later, the program has grown and in 2007, CSU staff and volunteers worked together to raise funds, and prepare and deliver groceries for 73 families. Founders and participants in the program credit the CSU staff for the growth in the program, specifically the managers of the program, including Mr. Rankin, who now serves as Director, Mr. Ben Fadley, a former CSU Director, and Mr. Jeff Homan, Deputy Director.

Mr. Rankin says there are many who have made this program a success who deserve recognition: "The CSU staff, as well as their family members, friends and volunteers, have all come together, not only with financial contributions, but with their personal time too, to help with the program; without their support, this could not have grown as it has."

The National Counseling Group (NCG) has been pleased to serve as a major contributor to the program. In addition to making financial contributions to purchase groceries, NCG staff have joined with CSU employees to volunteer their time and support. "NCG has really come forward to support our program," said Mr. Rankin. "They consistently volunteer to help us in any way we need them and we appreciate all they do to assist us and our neediest families."

Mr. Tom Minnick, President and CEO of NCG, cites the project as a "wonderful collaboration between government, courts, schools, and local businesses to ensure the spirit of the holidays

can be enjoyed by those who are less fortunate in our community.” He added, “they deserve to be honored for the exceptional way they are impacting our community.”

The NCG National Conference where the CSU Food Basket Drive will be honored in Richmond will also feature remarks from Governor Tim Kaine, Del. Phil Hamilton of Newport News, former Secretary of Education Jim Dyke, and nationally known mental health expert, Dr. Stanton Samenow.

In addition to presenting a Community Service Award to the CSU Food Drive, NCG will also present an award to Mr. Bud Sedwick, Comprehensive Services Act Coordinator for Henry and Patrick Counties and the City of Martinsville, who will be recognized for going above and beyond in supporting the needs of children in his community.

The overall focus of the conference will be on celebrating NCG's 15 years providing premium mental health services to individuals and families throughout Virginia, as well as on showcasing the positive impact public-private partnerships can have serving mental health needs in Virginia.

Attendance at the conference is free for members of the media with advance registration; Contact Mindy Williams at mwilliams@accesspointpa.com or 703-222-7607 to register.

BACKGROUND:

The National Counseling Group, Inc. (NCG) is a private organization that was established in 1993 by Thomas W. Minnick in order to provide an outpatient program designed to more effectively address the needs of individuals suffering from the combination of mental health and substance abuse disorders by treating dual diagnosis under one roof. Comprised of highly skilled, professional and caring counselors, NCG has provided premium therapeutic services to individuals and families throughout Virginia for 15 years. NCG has received many accolades for providing a variety of outpatient and community-based services to address community mental health needs throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. NCG currently has offices in Annandale, the Eastern Shore, Herndon/Dulles, Hopewell, Manassas, Martinsville, Newport News, Richmond, Virginia Beach, Roanoke and Winchester.

NCG specializes in treating behavioral problems, substance abuse issues, mental health disorders and family discord. As a result, countless professionals have utilized NCG to service the needs of children, adolescents, young adults, adults and families. In addition to receiving referrals from private psychiatrists, attorneys, and physicians, NCG has strong relationships with public agencies throughout Virginia. NCG has contracts with more than 100 public agencies (including various Departments of Social Services, Court Services Units, Community Service Boards and public schools) and serves clients in more than 50 counties.

In addition, NCG is playing a major role to increase the accessibility of care to children, adults and families through public-private partnerships, provision of community-based programming, offering Medicaid-funded services and through charitable giving. In fact, in 2007 alone, NCG served more than 4,000 individuals and donated more than \$300,000 to community causes. For more information about NCG, visit www.nationalcounselinggroup.com.

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