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Contact:

Samantha Slater, 202/785-7738, slaters@aauw.org

Charter Oak State College Program Wins AAUW Award

Program helps women earn their college degrees while supporting their children

New Britain, CT – The American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund granted the Women in Transition program of Charter Oak State College in New Britain, Connecticut, the 2007 Progress in Equity Award for its work in advancing educational opportunities for women in a critically underserved population.

The Women in Transition (WIT) program provides higher education opportunities for low-income, underemployed single mothers to earn their college degrees through online courses, which allow them the freedom to work and care for their children while minimizing travel costs. Through this program, participants have become not only strong, empowered individuals but also role models for their children. The program will receive \$5,000 from AAUW and will use the award to fund the technology needs of its students.

The Progress in Equity Award recognizes college and university programs that promote equity for women. Now in its 20th year, the award has provided \$111,700 to 40 schools and programs across the country. Merle Harris, president of Charter Oak, said, “We are pleased that a unique program that has helped low-income, single mothers earn a college degree and achieve self-sufficiency has received this recognition.”

Coincidentally, AAUW members were instrumental in the founding of Charter Oak State College. Many years ago, members of the Naugatuck (CT) Branch contributed to an AAUW of Connecticut booklet for nontraditional female students on how to return to college. The branch members saw a great need for institutions to accommodate such students and undertook an intensive lobbying effort in the state legislature. In 1973, the school’s charter was authorized.

An awards presentation will be held November 19 at 5 p.m. at Founders’ Hall on the campus of nearby Central Connecticut State University to honor the Women in Transition program. Lauren Kamnik, Director of the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, will present the award. Members of the press and public are invited to attend.

The University of Toledo, Ohio, received an honorable mention award for its Leaders in Residence program, in which AAUW branch leaders work with students and faculty to raise awareness of education and equity issues and to foster leadership development.

For more information about the award ceremony, contact Joan Jupiter, LAF program assistant, at 202/785-7750 or jupiterj@aauw.org. For more information about the Progress in Equity Award or to schedule an interview with AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Director Lauren Kamnik, please contact Samantha Slater at 202/785-7738, slaters@aauw.org. Photos are available on request.

The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, a program of the AAUW Educational Foundation, is the nation’s largest legal fund focused solely on sex discrimination in higher education. It provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination.

Because Equity Is Still an Issue.

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