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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**UNITED WAYS OF TENNESSEE RECOGNIZES GOVERNOR FOR
LEADERSHIP IN EARLY LEARNING**
Governor Bredesen called "great advocate for our youngest children"

NASHVILLE – TENN. – September 24, 2008

United Ways of Tennessee (UWTN) announced today that Governor Phil Bredesen will receive an award from UWTN, the association of 40 United Ways in the state, recognizing his leadership for promoting early childhood learning in Tennessee.

“We are pleased to recognize Governor Bredesen as an outstanding and passionate advocate for our youngest children,” said Susan Goodman, UWTN Board Chair. “He understands the value of early childhood education as an investment in the future of our state and as a great way to advance the common good in our communities.”

UWTN and its member United Ways have partnered with the Governor the past three years to support the establishment of 46 new Pre-K classrooms throughout the state by providing matching funds of nearly \$1 million. UWTN and most of its member United Ways also participate on the Tennessee Alliance on Early Education, which similarly promotes implementing Pre-K classrooms throughout the state.

“Pre-K is the best strategy for improving overall education performance in Tennessee,” stated Goodman. “It improves school readiness, increases high school graduation rates, and reduces delinquency and teen pregnancy.”

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But according to Mary Graham, UWTN President, the Governor's support of early learning goes even beyond his stellar Pre-K work. "He is a true champion for early child development," Graham said, noting that during his administration, he launched the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation, which works in partnership with the Dollywood Foundation's Imagination Library to subsidize distribution of books to children throughout the state. "He has also supported expanding child care reimbursement for low income families so they can find quality environments for their children—another one of UWTN's primary objectives," Graham added.

United Way is extremely vested in early learning, including supporting Pre-K, child care reimbursement for low income families, and initiatives like Born Learning®, Read to Succeed, and Success by Six®, as well as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program and the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation. For information on early learning activities in your community, please contact your local United Way.

(United Ways of Tennessee is an association of 40 United Ways throughout the state. As Tennessee's leading community solutions provider, United Way is the driving force behind many initiatives that provide solutions to our state's most critical needs. United Ways in Tennessee provided more than \$100 million in funding last year to more than 1,300 agencies and programs, meeting the most diverse and essential needs of Tennesseans, such as literacy programs, initiatives creating economic opportunity, enrichment programs for children and youth, domestic violence prevention and services, and assistance to vulnerable and aging populations.)

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