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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Our Piece of the Pie Awarded \$155,000
From the Nellie Mae Education Foundation**
Money to Support OPPportunity High School

Hartford, CT—Our Piece of the Pie®, Inc. (OPP ®), a leading youth development agency in Hartford, has been awarded \$155,027 from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation for planning of OPPportunity High School (OHS).

OHS, a partnership with Hartford Public Schools, will engage over-aged, under-credited students who have dropped out, or are in danger of dropping out of high school. The school will be a small, academically rigorous diploma-granting high school that combines the unique skills and expertise of Our Piece of the Pie and Hartford Public Schools. OHS is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009.

The funding is part of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation’s Multiple Pathways grantmaking program, which is part of the Foundation’s Pathways to Higher Learning Initiative. The program is aimed at increasing student retention and persistence (especially among traditionally underserved student populations.) The program promotes a wider variety of high quality learning options in a variety of settings, including schools and colleges, community organizations and the workplace.

OPP is one of five organizations or communities in New England to receive between \$80,000 and \$160,000 from the Foundation.

“OPP is very thankful to the Nellie Mae Foundation for supporting our efforts to plan and eventually open OPPportunity high school,” said Bob Rath, OPP President/CEO. “Funding from

the Foundation is a validation of our efforts to help the youth of Hartford achieve academic success and eventually economic freedom.”

Along with OPP, the following organizations have also been awarded funds from the Nellie Mae Foundation:

- Mount Abraham Union High School and the Five Town Community Learning Center (Bristol, VT)
- The Providence Plan and Building Futures—a New Pathway for Career and Technical Education (Providence, Rhode Island)
- Rural School and Community Trust and Multiple Pathway to Success (Skowhegan, Maine)
- Flanders Bay Community School District and Summer Pathways to Higher Education (Sullivan Maine)

The Foundation believes that by promoting developmentally appropriate alternatives to the traditional high school-to-college/work continuum, students will stay in educational settings longer, learn more, and be better prepared for further education, careers, and citizenship.

“The creation of multiple pathways has emerged as a promising way to address the needs of diverse learners, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds,” said Nicholas C. Donohue, President and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. “We’re excited to work with and learn from these five partnerships as we examine new ways to stimulate transformative change in public education systems across New England.”

Funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation will help OPP and Hartford Schools in the planning phases of OPPportunity High School (OHS). This includes: composing a work team to help develop a curricula template in alignment with Connecticut standards and OHS’s teaching framework; designing a youth development play book that reviews best practices in youth development; and to help develop a training academy for all school personnel.

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The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest philanthropy in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation provides grants and other support to education programs and intermediary organizations in order to stimulate transformative change in public education systems and ensure that all New England’s learners are prepared for success. The Foundation investigates, promotes and supports a greater variety of high-quality educational opportunities that enable all citizens—*especially and essentially those from underserved populations*—to obtain the skills, knowledge and supports necessary to become civically engaged, economically self-sufficient, life-long learners. Since it was established in 1998, the Foundation has distributed nearly \$83 million in grants. Currently, it primarily provides funding through five strategic initiatives: *Early Learning, Pathways to Higher Learning, Time for Learning, Adult Learning, and Systems Building*. www.nmefdn.org.

The mission of **Our Piece of the Pie®** is to “help Hartford youth become successful adults.” OPP helps youth, ages 14-24, overcome social and financial obstacles and achieve academic success and economic freedom. OPP’s Pathways to Success matches each young person with a Youth Development Specialist (YDS) who helps the youth develop a concrete plan for the future. Inside of Pathways, youth participate in educational and employment programs that help them attain the long-term goals of a two or four-year degree from college or vocational certification, and/or unsubsidized employment in their chosen field.