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**CHILD GUIDANCE CENTER HONORS OMAHA SENATOR
WITH CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP AWARD**

October 15, 2008 (Lincoln, NE)-- Child Guidance Center will honor Omaha senator John Synowiecki (District 7) at its Sixth Annual Leader in Children's Mental Health Award Breakfast on October 15, 2008 (7:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.) at the Nebraska Club located in the U.S. Bank Building (233 S 13 St., 20th floor). Various civic leaders, legislative candidates, business executives, mental health professionals and Child Guidance Center supporters, will attend the event to recognize the senator's leadership in the Legislature to push for improvements in Nebraska's child behavioral health policy through the introduction of LB 542, which led to the creation of a Children's Behavioral Health Task Force and a statewide plan to implement changes to better serve the youth and families struggling to navigate the current system.

Synowiecki introduced LB 542 in January 2007, which included increasing efficiencies in both service delivery and funding to more effectively address the mental and behavioral health needs of Nebraska's children, adolescents, and their families. Following the passage of LB 542 in May 2008, a Children's Behavioral Health Task Force was created to examine the State's children's behavioral health policy and to provide the Legislature with information necessary to make informed decisions regarding the future of behavioral health care. The Task Force identified and evaluated appropriate policy changes to make the system more efficient and satisfactory to families— including opportunities to provide more individualized, community-based services to youth rather than institutional-based services. In January 2008, The Department of Health and Human Services responded to the Task Force's report by developing an implementation plan (*"Creating Change and Providing Hope for Nebraska's Children, Adolescents, and Their Families"*) outlining its strategy to execute and fund the group's recommendations. The department's plan now provides the Governor and Legislature with the details they need to move forward with developing a behavioral health system that provides children and families with the optimum level of care— the appropriate type of treatment, in the right setting, for the right length of time, and at an affordable, sustainable cost.

Child Guidance Center is pleased to present this year's award to Synowiecki, celebrating his pivotal role in the Legislature to address the efficacy of Nebraska's behavioral health policy, which put in motion this series of legislative advancements to improve the current system.

"John Synowiecki has been instrumental in supporting a vision to strengthen our State's system of care, through better coordination, delivery, and evaluation of services for kids and their families. He has shown a great commitment to children's emotional and behavioral health, and we are pleased to honor his leadership and advocacy on this issue in the Legislature," remarked Carol Crumpacker, Ph.D., Child Guidance Center executive director.

Sarah Ann Lewis, policy coordinator for Voices for Children, will provide a keynote address regarding the group's legislative priorities for the coming year, including recommendations to amend Nebraska's safe haven law.

Established in 1949, Child Guidance Center is a professionally staffed nonprofit agency dedicated to providing mental health services to Lincoln's children, adolescents, and their families— regardless of financial ability. Each year, Child Guidance Center serves over 2,000 youth along with their families, utilizing a continuum of prevention, early intervention and treatment options to meet every individual's needs. Child Guidance Center uses a trauma-focused approach to address the underlying issues that cause youth to act out. This leads to more effective treatment outcomes and gives them the care they need to move forward and reach their fullest potential. Visit www.child-guidance.org for more information.

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