

For Immediate Release

Contact: Cloydia Hill Larimore
Vice President for Resource Development
Phone: 217/367-3728
Email: clarimore@cunninghamhome.org
www.cunninghamhome.org

Students at Cunningham's Gerber School Win Food Drive Award

November 9, 2003 (Urbana, IL) — Troy, a young resident at Cunningham Children's Home and his classmates have been busy learning important life lessons at Gerber School. "We made Rice Krispies treats and caramel corn and went to the grocery store," he explains enthusiastically. Troy's teacher helped her students make food, organize bake sales and purchase food to give to the Eastern Illinois Food Bank during the Food for Families Food Drive in October.

The students at Gerber School won \$500.00 and First Place in an elementary school contest sponsored by Illinois Power. Prizes were given to the schools that collected the most food per student. All of the food collected by the school children will benefit the food bank which serves several agencies in East Central Illinois.

Gerber School, located on the grounds of Cunningham Children's Home, provides special education for children and youth in Cunningham's residential program on the main campus and in the group homes. Services at Gerber help students make a transition to public school on a part time basis with a goal of returning to public school full time.

The food drive event was a special opportunity to help Cunningham youth practice the elements of the Circle of Courage, the agency wide treatment model used to frame all of Cunningham's programs. The Circle of Courage is derived from Native American child rearing practices and is articulated in Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our hope for the future by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern.

The Circle involves four interrelated dimensions Belonging (attachment), Mastery (achievement), Independence (autonomy), and Generosity (altruism). By participating in the Food for Families event the children and youth at Gerber School were able to learn about mastery and independence by learning new skills as they made food snacks to sell and learned how to raise money for a special cause. They also were able to experience generosity by giving of themselves in service to others. So how will Gerber School use its \$500.00 prize money? "We're going to do a yearbook with all of our pictures in it," explains Troy. "But maybe we should give it to the food bank," he said thoughtfully.

On an annual basis, Cunningham Children's Home provides residential treatment services and supportive independent living programs for over 200 children and youth with extremely severe behavioral and emotional disorders. Cunningham Children's Home is a mission and ministry of the United Methodist Women of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference in partnership with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

###

