

NEWS RELEASE

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2-1-1 ON 2/11

United Way of RI and 2-1-1 staff visit nine locations; distribute materials statewide to connect Rhode Islanders to United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island

(February 11, 2009) - Officials from United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) and *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island* will be at high-traffic locations today, barnstorming the state asking Rhode Islanders, "Can we help?"

Wednesday, Feb. 11, (2-11 on the calendar) is national 2-1-1 Day, and United Way is taking the step of sending its staff around the state to raise awareness about its 2-1-1 program.

"Just as with 9-1-1 and 4-1-1, 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember telephone number for people to call when they have problems but don't know where to turn," said Anthony Maione, UWRI President and CEO. "This service puts more people in touch with services they need more easily."

United Way, which funds and operates 2-1-1, began offering the service in Rhode Island in June 2007. When callers dial 2-1-1, they reach an information referral professional, who listens to their concerns or questions and then connects them to a social-service agency, government office, or provider who can address the question or need. This free service is multi-lingual, and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"2-1-1 is a barometer of need in our community. In the first year, United Way received more than 100,000 inquiries through its hotline and website, www.211RI.org," said Cristina Amedeo, 2-1-1 call center director. "To date, nearly one in every ten Rhode Islanders has turned to 2-1-1 for help finding services they need and get connected. 2-1-1 is a point of entry for individuals from all walks of life, ranging from the family that just lost their income to the person that has substance abuse issues and does not know where to turn. With 102,105 calls received in 2008, 8,857 in December and 9,772 in January of 2009, the need to get connected is evident more than ever. Callers ranged from a person of low income to a person once considered middle income. Major needs

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requested were financial assistance for rent and mortgage, utilities, and housing search.”

The 2-1-1 hotline is backed by a \$500,000 yearly commitment from United Way, which includes funding from a three-year grant from the Hasbro Children’s Fund. Additional funding is provided through contracts with the Dept. of Human Services, Dept. of Elderly Affairs, and the RI Lottery Commission.

“This is a case of the United Way putting its mouth where its money is,” Maione said. “Now, more than ever, it is vitally important that Rhode Islanders realize there is help out there and 2-1-1 can be their guide.”

UWRI and 2-1-1 staff have delivered materials to over 100 locations across the state in preparation for 2-1-1 Day. Staff will visit the following locations on 2/11 - Shaws, 100 Franklin St, Westerly, University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Bryant University, Community College of RI, Warwick Campus, Kennedy Plaza, Providence, Women and Infants Hospital and Newport Grand.

About United Way of Rhode Island

United Way of Rhode Island has been working to improve the quality of life in Rhode Island communities for over 80 years. UWRI’s mission is to mobilize the caring power of the community to improve the lives of people in need and address the issues Rhode Islanders care most about. United Way’s goal is to create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place. We believe that all Rhode Islanders deserve the opportunity to have a better life, as when any one of us succeeds, we all succeed. At United Way, we refer to this as advancing the common good. For more information, visit www.LIVEUNITEDri.org.