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## Immediate Release

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# Jewish Funds for Justice gives \$10,000 to UWRI's homelessness prevention effort

*With United Way of Rhode Island's match, the Fund tops \$240,000*

**Providence, RI** (April 8, 2009): United Way of Rhode Island announced today that the Jewish Funds for Justice, a national public foundation based in New York City, donated \$10,000 to *United Way's Fund to Prevent Homelessness in Rhode Island* through its donor advised giving program.

The contribution went directly to United Way's community-wide education and fundraising initiative -- *Fund to Prevent Homelessness in Rhode Island* -- to keep at-risk Rhode Islanders in their homes and out of the already-overburdened shelter system. The donation pushed the total dollars raised to top \$120,000. UWRI matched those funds \$1-for-\$1 and, to date, has distributed more than \$240,000 to 23 agencies around the state.

United Way of Rhode Island launched the *Fund* in mid-January as part of an urgent call to stem the rapidly growing homelessness numbers caused by Rhode Island's severe economic downturn. The three-month education and fundraising effort, which ended March 31, heightened the public's awareness of the foreclosure crisis; economic plight of working families; and need to help keep people in their homes. One

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hundred percent of the contributions made to the *Fund* are being distributed directly to people who need assistance to meet rent, mortgage and utilities payments.

In addition to soliciting contributions from the community, United Way invited those in need of help to dial its telephone referral hotline, 2-1-1. Calls during Jan., Feb. and March topped 30,600 and hits on the web site [211ri.org](http://211ri.org) increased. A majority of the callers reported that they lost a job, and they needed to wait six-to-eight weeks before receiving unemployment benefits. Many said they were renters who had been evicted because of a foreclosure.

“This very generous gift from The Jewish Funds for Justice arrives at a time of great need when we are receiving a huge volume of calls to our 2-1-1 social services hotline.” said UWRI President and CEO Anthony Maione. “After achieving decreases in homelessness in Rhode Island for the past two years, since the fall there have been alarming increases. I call it ‘middle-class drift,’ and it is disturbing. We all know the toll of homelessness in human terms.”

This winter United Way called upon the entire community to support the *United Way Fund to Prevent Homelessness in Rhode Island*. “Each time we help someone from falling into homelessness, it is a win for all Rhode Islanders,” said Maione. “In times like these, we are all in it together. When we reach out a hand to one, we improve the condition of all.”

Anyone in need of assistance can visit [www.211ri.org](http://www.211ri.org) or dial 2-1-1, United Way’s confidential, around-the-clock health and human services hotline staffed by information-referral professionals. Those who qualify for assistance from this special fund, meet with a caseworker at one of the more than 23 participating agencies.

The caseworker will determine what other state, federal, or nonprofit assistance is also available to the family/individual. As demand for assistance is great, the general limit on assistance is \$1,200 per individual or family, although the caseworker has some discretion in very special cases. The money must be used to keep a person or a family in a home or an apartment. Participating agencies will pay bills on behalf of the persons requesting help. No money will go directly to families; the agency will pay bills to the appropriate vendor.

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### **About Jewish Funds for Justice**

The Jewish Funds for Justice is a national public foundation guided by Jewish history and tradition. JFSJ helps people in the United States achieve social and economic security and opportunity by investing in healthy neighborhoods, vibrant Jewish communities, and skillful leaders. Our holistic approach to social change includes grant making and loans, service learning, leadership development, organizing, education, and advocacy. For more information, visit [www.jewishjustice.org](http://www.jewishjustice.org)

### **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](http://www.LIVEUNITEDri.org).

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