

United Way greets Olneyville with fund

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PROVIDENCE — The United Way of Rhode Island celebrated the opening of its new Olneyville headquarters yesterday by holding a block party and announcing a \$500,000 grant program to help improve the Providence neighborhood.

United Way President Anthony Maione said the money — \$100,000 a year for five years — will go to “special projects,” though the agency has not defined that term.

“We’re not sure yet,” said Maione. “What we really want to do is work with the community to understand what the needs are.”

He said a project will have to meet one — and, he hopes, all three — of the agency’s goals for the neighborhood: success in school, job-skills development and affordable housing.

“We’ll probably see what’s needed and make a direct investment,” he said. “Our hope would be that, as we do that, it will attract other dollars.” He said United Way spending frequently is matched by federal or corporate dollars.

The money will come out of the agency’s annual budget, from its Community Impact Fund.

During a brief speech at the block party, Maione said the Unit-

ed Way has a seven-year lease on the former Providence Bleaching, Dyeing and Calendaring mill on Valley Street, with an option to buy it. “I’d buy it right now if I could because we plan to be here for a long time.”

Three weeks ago, the agency moved its 50 employees into the mill from Wayland Square on the East Side, where it had been for 30



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years. One reason for the move is that the United Way expects its presence will have a greater impact in poorer Olneyville than in the wealthy East Side. Community leaders

yesterday welcomed the agency to Olneyville.

“There’s no denying the impact they’re having just by their very presence,” said Andrew Cortez, director of Youth Build, an agency that helps young people train for jobs in the building trades.

Said City Councilwoman Josephine DiRuzzo, who represents the area: “Moving from the East Side to Olneyville is a testament to their mission.”

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