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United Way Prioritizes Immediate Needs
Community Volunteers Fund Immediate and Long-Term Solutions

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (June 25, 2009) – Given the tough economy, United Way of Northeast Florida’s Board of Trustees announced today that it will prioritize programs that support family financial stability by providing basic needs. In deciding where dollars raised in the 2008 campaign will be invested, United Way leaders determined that the need for food, shelter, and related assistance was critical to keep families whole and children safe. Their decision acknowledged that United Way’s funding decisions are being made as demand for basic needs and other services continue to soar. Calls to United Way’s 2-1-1 helpline for emergency financial assistance are up 30% and referrals for food, shelter and clothing have increased 113% over last year.

With the Trustees’ and Directors’ action today, United Way will invest more than \$18.6 million in agency programs including those that address immediate, basic needs as well as programs proven to keep children from falling behind in school and to promote senior independence. These programs are being funded primarily by donations to United Way’s Community Fund, which strategically focuses on “root cause” issues to achieve long-term community impact.

Funding for United Way-supported programs in FY 2009/10 spans two campaign cycles –the past campaign (fall 2008) and the upcoming campaign (fall 2009).

While programs serving immediate, basic needs will be fully funded, other categories of United Way-supported programs will experience a \$1.78 million decrease in the fiscal year 2009/10 which begins July 1, 2009.

“We knew that if the 2008 campaign total decreased, agency programs would be affected. United Way has kept us abreast of developments throughout the spring, so we have been anticipating this reduction,” explained Myron Flagler, CEO of Jewish Community Alliance, a United Way partner agency, and Chair of United Way Agency Directors Association in Northeast Florida.

All agency programs will not experience the same level of reduction in funding across the board. As part of its annual Resource Management process, more than 100 unpaid volunteers spent 4,200 hours developing the funding recommendations approved by United Way trustees and directors. In arriving at their decisions, the volunteers determined the following recommendations:

- United Way programs which are proven to be effective in addressing basic needs will be fully funded.
- Programs which align with United Way’s priority focus in education (early childhood success and reducing the dropout rate) and senior independence and engagement will sustain a 10% decrease.
- Programs which address core issues such as planning, abuse prevention education, and services for special disabilities will be reduced an average of 25%.
- Strategic decreases averaged 39% for selected programs, based upon criticality, outcome measurement, and availability of other resources.

In anticipation of decreases in agency funding, United Way cut its own operating budget by \$400,000 earlier in the year to cushion the impact of the funding gap. For fiscal year 2009/10 beginning July 1, United Way has again tightened its budget in light of the shortfall. The organization has imposed a salary freeze, instituted a voluntary leave-without-pay policy, combined and scaled back special events and awards, reduced travel and training, and left vacant positions unfilled.

United Way's funding decisions come at a time when many nonprofits are experiencing state and local government cutbacks. A recent United Way survey revealed that more than three-fourths of United Way certified agencies were expecting revenue losses in 2009, with more than \$4.3 million at risk. Released this month, *Giving USA 2009* reports that donations to human services dropped 12.7 percent from a year ago—one of the largest declines across charitable giving sectors in 2008.

Connie Hodges, president of United Way of Northeast Florida, said, "These decreases represent people who will not be served. That's been the challenge for our volunteers, our staff, and our agency partners. Yet it is spurring our efforts to educate citizens about the impact of their gift through United Way's Community Fund, which allows us to strategically direct investments where need is greatest."

Board of Directors Chair Barbara Drake said, "These decisions were some of the most difficult in our history. Our volunteers invested thousands of hours of evaluation and discussion to ensure a thoughtful, deliberate review of each program. Now, it's time to turn our focus toward raising more money for these programs in the coming year,"

In looking toward the upcoming campaign, Trustee Chair Kevin Twomey reflected, "Work is already underway in planning our 2009 campaign. We must mobilize our citizens to step forward and ensure that Northeast Florida children and families will

thrive. We're in extraordinary times and our success will be predicated on how we respond as an entire community."

United Way of Northeast Florida works to create real, long-lasting change in Northeast Florida by focusing on the building blocks for a good life. In partnership with volunteers, community organizations, and leaders, United Way is creating opportunities to improve life for people in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and northern St. Johns counties. In addition, United Way leads United Way 2-1-1, a 24/7 information referral hotline; Life: Act 2, a proactive response to an exploding senior population; and Full Service Schools, a community approach to removing barriers to academic success. For more information, call 904-390-3200 or visit www.liveunitednortheastflorida.org.

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