



For Immediate Release
April 13, 2009

United for Hope/United to Help Fundraising Campaign Seeking Individual Donations During Final Week

(Greater Kansas City)---- In light of the economic downturn that has left thousands in our community homeless and without jobs, there is one question many people are asking. That is, “What can I do to help?” United Way and a dozen community partners have an answer. It’s a community-wide fundraising effort called *United for Hope/United to Help*. Together, the partners are donating more than \$2 million to provide additional funding of local emergency assistance programs, but, even more money is needed. That is why United Way is reaching out to the community, asking everyone who has the ability to help to consider making a donation.

Organizers of the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign have targeted the week of April 13th - 20th for a community-wide appeal. They are asking individuals, friends and families to join in this important fundraising effort to help the tens of thousands of people who are walking a financial tightrope that seems to be getting more slippery every day.

United Way of Greater Kansas City President & CEO Brent Stewart said, “These are difficult and unusual times. People who never thought they would be in a position of asking for help are finding themselves left with no choice. They are struggling to provide food for their families, pay their utility bills and keep up with their rent or mortgage. Many have no health insurance, meaning they must also cover the cost of medicine and doctors visits themselves. These are good people, affected by circumstances beyond their control. As a community, we *can* help. And we *must* do so now.”

Stewart is encouraging everyone to take a moment in the coming week to either make a donation online at www.unitedwaygkc.org or sit down and write a check. Those checks should be made payable to United Way and mailed to:

United for Hope/United to Help
c/o United Way
1080 Washington St.
Kansas City, MO 64105

United Way is also accepting donations by telephone. The number to call is (816) 559-4645.

Every dollar raised through the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign will be used to help those in need. A portion of the money raised will go to provide immediate emergency assistance grants to help specific low-income individuals and families impacted by the economic downturn. The remainder will be used to provide financial support for agencies considered “first responders” in times of economic crisis. Those agencies provide food, rent/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, help with medicine or medical supplies, transportation assistance, job readiness and placement programs and emergency shelter.

(more)

Nearly 60 Kansas City area nonprofit agencies have applied for special funding through the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign. Grant applications were due by April 13th with checks going out to agencies in early May. A second round of funding will take place in August, based on the amount of money raised through the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign.

United Way expects many of those agencies to apply for special funding. They are being flooded with requests for help and many are struggling to meet the demand. A few examples are:

- **Redemptorist Center** reports a 130% increase in households seeking rent and mortgage assistance in the first quarter of 2009 compared to first quarter of 2008.
- **El Centro** reports that the number of people seeking help from its Olathe office in the fourth quarter of 2008 and first quarter of 2009 is up nearly 60% compared to a year ago.
- **Jewish Family Services** says it received more requests for help in January and February of this year than during any time in its history. The \$40,000 it gave to clients in need was four times the total it gave out in January and February of 2008.
- **Harvesters** distributed 2.62 million pounds of food in January, a 23% increase over a year ago. A recent survey of nonprofit agencies receiving food from Harvesters reveals a 40% increase in the number of clients seeking food. Nearly 75% of those agencies report an increase in families that are seeking help for the first time.

Harvesters and Mid America Assistance Coalition (MAAC) were the first to receive special funding from the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign. Harvesters, which provides food to more than 550 local food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters, received a check for \$130,000 in mid-March. MAAC, which will play a key role in tracking the distribution of the funds to individual families and clients to avoid duplication and prevent abuse, received a check for \$50,000.

Stewart said, "It is hard to imagine what many people are going through right now. They're struggling with the uncertainty of having no job, faced with choosing between paying bills or buying food for their family and wondering if they'll be forced to leave their home." Stewart added, "The generous people of Greater Kansas City have always come through when times are tough and I'm hopeful that they will again. Every gift, no matter how large or small, will make a difference in the number of people we are able to help. Don't wait until tomorrow. Your help is needed right now."

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For further information, contact:

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