



For Immediate Release
March 11, 2009

United Way and Local Foundations Launch Fundraising Effort to Help Local Families in Crisis

\$4 Million Goal Set for *United for Hope/United to Help* Campaign

(Greater Kansas City)---Throughout the years, people in the Kansas City area have pulled together during times of crisis. Through the Great Depression, devastating floods and deadly tornados, Kansas Citians have cared for one another. For many in Greater Kansas City, the current economic downturn is turning into the biggest crisis of their lives. In response, Kansas City's largest and most trusted charities are joining forces to rally community support.

United Way of Greater Kansas City (UWGKC) announced today a special, community-wide fundraising campaign to raise \$4 million for local programs providing emergency assistance. The campaign will run through April 20, with the final week being focused on garnering individual donations from the community.

During a morning news conference, UWGKC President & CEO Brent Stewart and Greater Kansas City Community Foundation President & CEO Laura McKnight announced that the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign has already received commitments of nearly \$2 million from local foundations and nonprofit agencies. Stewart said raising the second half of the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign's \$4 million goal will require everyone's support, whether their gifts are large or small.

In announcing the campaign, Stewart said, "Everyone is concerned about the individuals in our community who've been impacted by the depressed economy. We all know people who've lost their jobs or faced eviction or foreclosure. People want to help, but they aren't sure of the best way to go about it. The *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign provides a simple way in which people can give their money with confidence that it will go where it's needed most." Stewart added, "Every dollar we raise during this special fundraising effort will go directly to providing services."

"United Way and other community partners decided we can, and must, do something to help the many people whose lives have been turned upside-down," Stewart said. "We believe that by joining forces in a coordinated, community-wide fundraising effort, we can be more effective than if dozens of nonprofit agencies tried to raise money on their own."

Stewart added, "Some generous foundations have started the ball rolling, but we need the support of every single person to reach our \$4 million goal. You have four weeks. Plan a party with neighbors and collect donations, sponsor a fundraising drive at church, or organize a special event with friends. We are asking everyone to find a way to help."

McKnight said, "The Community Foundation is encouraged that so many of its donors are stepping forward to help people in need. Now more than ever, donors are getting serious about organizing their generosity, and many are placing United Way firmly among their top charitable priorities for 2009."

The community partners that are stepping up to get the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign off to a good start include:

- George K. Baum Family Foundation
- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and its donors
- Hall Family Foundation
- Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City
- H&R Block Foundation
- Jewish Heritage Foundation
- REACH Healthcare Foundation
- Sosland Foundation
- John W. and Effie E. Speas Memorial Trust - Bank of America, Trustee
- Sprint Foundation
- United Way of Greater Kansas City

The money raised through the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign will be used in two ways. The first is to provide immediate emergency assistance grants to help specific low-income individuals and families impacted by the economic downturn. The second is to provide financial support for agencies that are considered “first responders” to the economic crisis.

People who need help are encouraged to call United Way 2-1-1 as a first point of contact by dialing 2-1-1 on most phones, or (816) 474-5112. United Way call specialists will help determine callers’ eligibility and refer them to the proper nonprofit agencies providing assistance in their area.

Demonstrating our commitment to quickly distributing money raised through the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign, checks totaling \$180,000 were presented today to Harvesters and Mid America Assistance Coalition (MAAC). Harvesters, which provides food to more than 550 local food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters received \$130,000. MAAC, which will play a key role in reporting and tracking both grants and clients receiving emergency assistance funding, received \$50,000.

United Way will be reaching out to the media and working with other community partners to spread the word about the *United for Hope/United to Help* campaign over the next several weeks. The community-wide fundraising effort will provide an easy way for people to help those affected by the struggling economy. We will be publicizing the various ways to give prior to the public campaign, and will make a variety of giving options available.

Individuals who don’t want to wait may give now by sending a check, payable to United Way, to:

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

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For additional information, contact:

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