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**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
03/30/2010**

United Way of Northwest Arkansas Targets Re-opening 2-1-1 Service for July

Lowell, AR – When 2-1-1, the easy-to-remember, three-digit, Arkansas-wide information and referral system ceased operations in October 2009 due to lack of state funding, it left a gap in services for Northwest Arkansas residents dependent on the system to obtain and provide help to meet their health and human service needs.

Guided by the 2008 Community Indicators Report, which showed that access to health and human service programs is important to our area, United Way of Northwest Arkansas (UWNWA) felt that re-starting 2-1-1 was a top priority. With that as the guide, United Way is re-establishing 2-1-1 service in a limited area of Northwest Arkansas with a target start date of July 6, 2010.

The call center will be located in the UWNWA office in Lowell, and will have one full-time, and two part-time, staff answering calls. Hours and days of operation are still being reviewed and will be announced prior to the re-launch.

United Way will provide funding to start the service, but will continue to look for grants and private donations to help sustain the operation over the long-term. United Way will also maintain the existing state-wide social services database, which will be accessible through the internet by all Arkansas residents. The database will be kept up-to-date for a possible expansion of 2-1-1 to other parts of the state in the future.

Prior to 2-1-1, United Way ran the First Call for Help line, which was a toll-free number for social service information and referral in Northwest Arkansas. Nearly six years ago, United Ways in Northwest Arkansas worked to replace First Call for Help with the 2-1-1 but after consulting with area and state leaders, and other key stakeholders, the decision was made to launch 2-1-1 throughout Arkansas. State-wide 2-1-1 started in May 2007 with call centers in Pine Bluff and Springdale, and was paid for by the United Ways of Arkansas as well as by private grants, with the hope that state funds would be made available to sustain the service long-term.

Individuals currently looking to access or connect with health and human service organizations can call 877.750.1221. Other announcements about 2-1-1 will be made over the next few months as the July 6 re-start date approaches.

About United Way of Northwest Arkansas

United Way is dedicated to helping advance the good of all in our community through focusing on key issue areas such as education, income and health to create lasting changes in our community. By engaging individuals and companies around giving, advocating and volunteering for these types of issues we can all work to Live United in Northwest Arkansas. For more information about how to Live United, please visit our website at www.unitedwaynwa.org.

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