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2-1-1 service rolls out in Southwest Illinois and other Illinois communities on National 2-1-1 Day this 24/7 free, confidential help line is now available

ST. LOUIS, MO (February 11, 2009) — Every hour of every day, someone in Illinois needs help locating and connecting with essential community services. On February 11, National 2-1-1 Day, the 2-1-1 telephone number makes its debut in Southwest Illinois and two other Illinois communities to help residents find fast, free and confidential help for health and human services. Provided by the United Way of Greater St. Louis, Southwest Illinois 2-1-1 is the number to call to get or give help throughout the Southwest Illinois region. PATH and United Way of Quad Cities are also rolling out 2-1-1 pilots in their communities on February 11.

Residents in Southwest Illinois (the counties of Calhoun, Clinton, Green, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, Randolph and St. Clair) can now dial three simple numbers: 2-1-1 from landline phones 24 hours, seven days/week to access information on health and human services in their communities. Cell phone users should call 800-427-4626 for the same service. The website, www.211southwestillinois.com is also available.

United Way of Quad Cities covers the counties of: Rock Island and in Iowa: Clinton, Muscatine and Scott. For the PATH 2-1-1 pilot, the counties covered are: DeWitt, Livingston and McLean.

“The United Way has always helped people and 2-1-1 does just that,” said Gary Dollar, president and chief executive officer of United Way of Greater St. Louis. “With the free service of 2-1-1, we’ll be able to help even more people. Simply put, 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember number for anyone to call, at any time, and it can be used to find information on health and human service assistance. When people don’t know where to turn for help, they go without, even though the needed service is readily available. By dialing 2-1-1, people can find help by making this free, confidential call.”

The 2-1-1 call specialists are available to help individuals locate health and human service assistance, on everything from mortgage assistance, EITC tax help and food and shelter, to job counseling services and health resources. 2-1-1 is for times of non-emergency crisis as well as for everyday needs. 2-1-1 offers easy access to community-based organizations and government agencies that provide services such as:

- Basic human needs: food banks, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance
- Physical and mental health resources: Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, Children’s Health Insurance Program, medical information phone lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation

—more—

- Employment support: financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, educational programs
- Support for older adults and people with disabilities: adult day care, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, independent living programs
- Support for children, youth and families: child care, after-school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services
- People also can call 2-1-1 to give help, to find agencies that need their volunteer support or how to donate help when it is needed

For technical reasons, all 2-1-1 service is currently limited to land line telephone services. Mobile phone users in Southwest Illinois can make the same one-call connection by dialing 1-800-427-4626. Calls through some business phone systems also may need to use the 800 number. Information and resources can also be found at: www.211southwestillinois.com, including a searchable database organized by zip code and type of service.

Sign up for the pledge and tell someone about 2-1-1 today: www.211southwestillinois.com.

United Way of Greater St. Louis has headed the Missouri 2-1-1 helpline for more than one year. Covering 99 Missouri counties, Missouri 2-1-1 professionally handled more than 87,490 calls in its first year. The Missouri 2-1-1 help line has exceeded expectations across the state. Most calls made to Missouri 2-1-1 are from people looking for help with basic needs such as utility, rent and food assistance. More and more calls are coming in regarding mortgage assistance.

for media: photos of Southwest Illinois 2-1-1 call center are available at www.211southwestillinois.com/pressroom.aspx

About Southwest Illinois 2-1-1

2-1-1 is a fast, free and confidential way to give or get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 2-1-1 call centers operate under national standards and are staffed by trained specialists who assess the callers' needs and refer them to the help they seek. Information is available on a broad range of services, including food banks, affordable housing, health resources, child care, after-school programs, elderly care, financial literacy, and job training programs. www.211southwestillinois.com

About United Way of Greater St. Louis

The United Way of Greater St. Louis funds nearly 200 health and human service agencies located throughout a 16-county area in Missouri and Illinois. More than one million people in our community receive services that strengthen families, help the elderly, keep children healthy and safe, and build stronger neighborhoods. For more information, contact 314-421-0700 or visit www.stl.unitedway.org.

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