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United Way of Northern California Celebrates 2-1-1 Day, adds two-way texting service to helpline

REDDING, CA (February 9, 2018) — Residents of Shasta and Tehama counties will be able to utilize two-way texting for help with social services in a major upgrade of the 2-1-1 information and referral helpline.

The launch of the text platform coincides with the celebration Sunday, February 11 (2/11) of National 2-1-1 Day. UWNC will have an information booth Sunday at Turtle Bay Exploration Park from 10 am to 3 pm, and welcomes all who are interested in knowing more about the service to stop by, as well as people who have called 2-1-1 and want to share feedback about the experience.

Texting addresses an important customer service need. “People are dialing 2-1-1 in increasing numbers for help, and we think adding a texting option will expand the reach of our service to an even greater degree,” said Larry Olmstead, President & CEO of United Way of Northern California (UWNC), which operates 2-1-1 NorCal.

“Many people love the convenience of text. Clients will get referrals in text form, they won’t have to write everything down,” Olmstead said. “And they will still get the unique value of 2-1-1 – a response from a live, trained specialist, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.”

“2-1-1” is designated by the Federal Communication Commission for community information and referral services, just as 9-1-1 is set aside for emergency services. Across North America, this helpline is operated by local United Way organizations and other non-profit organizations.

Locally, UWNC operates 2-1-1 NorCal, which provides services to Tehama & Shasta counties. UWNC also provides some funding to Help Central, Inc., which operates 2-1-1 for Butte County residents.

The helpline can handle calls in more than 150 languages. UWNC gets financial support for 2-1-1 from county governments, First 5, Dignity Health and other entities. United Way partners with Tehama Together to deliver the service in Tehama County.

In 2017, 2-1-1 NorCal took more than 5,000 calls, connecting local residents to needed services. More than 31,000 unique users conducted 140,000 searches on the web platform www.211norcal.org. Each of those figures were all-time highs. Residents seeking referrals via text can text their ZIP Code to TXT211 (898211). The service is available in English and Spanish. All 2-1-1 services are free and confidential.

To learn more about 2-1-1 NorCal visit www.211norcal.org.

About United Way of Northern California:

United Way of Northern California (UWNC) was established in Redding in 1953 and serves nine counties: Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity. Its mission is to fight for the education, income and health of all residents in the community. UWNC raises funds for non-profit agencies and operates two 24/7 human services helplines: 2-1-1 Shasta and 2-1-1 Tehama, collectively known as 2-1-1 NorCal. UWNC also operates Volunteer NorCal, a website that connects volunteers to agencies (volunteernorcal.org), and currently coordinates the Prosperity Initiative, a collective impact project that promotes financial stability and youth enrichment. For more information about United Way of Northern California visit www.norcalunitedway.org.

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