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FOR RELEASE AFTER 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 12, 2007

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United Way 2-1-1 Unveiled

United Way of Southwest Alabama announces one number that connects individuals to community resources and referrals

MOBILE, Alabama, April 12, 2007 — United Way of Southwest Alabama unveiled United Way 2-1-1 today. This easy-to-remember telephone number connects residents with important community services and volunteer opportunities offered by 55 United Way partner agencies and over 300 local organizations already listed in the 2-1-1 database. Now, individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities can call 2-1-1, a universal recognizable number that makes a critical connection between callers and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies.

People often don't know where to turn and sometimes go without those necessary and readily available services. United Way 2-1-1 will fill that gap," said Angelo Miller, Executive Director of United Way of Southwest Alabama. "With United Way 2-1-1, we're breaking down the barriers between those who need help and those who can help them."

Initially, this service will be available from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday thru Friday, to those calling from Mobile, Washington, Clarke Counties, with some exceptions. Ultimately, the service will extend to Choctaw and Monroe counties and offer expanded hours and days of service, as additional funding becomes available.

"The tragedy of hurricane Katrina showed us more than ever how important it is for members of a community to know where to call for help or to volunteer in the wake of a disaster," said Gigi Armbricht, Regional Manager of AT & T and 2007 United Way Board of Trustees Chairperson. "Every hour of every day, someone in the gulf coast region needs essential services—from substance abuse assistance to adequate care for a child or aging parent. 2-1-1 is a great community resource in time of emergency. This single phone number can help coordinate volunteers and agencies responding to local disasters. We're so excited to bring this essential community service to the gulf coast region free of charge."

When a caller dials 2-1-1, a specialist answers the phone, assesses the caller's situation, and taps into a comprehensive data base to locate appropriate services. For example, United Way 2-1-1 specialists, can offer access to:

- ✍ **Basic Human Needs Resources** - like utility assistance, food and temporary shelter
- ✍ **Physical and Mental Health Resources** – such as substance abuse education, counseling services, and crisis intervention services

- ✍ **Employment Support** – like financial assistance, job training and educational programs
- ✍ **Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities** – such as senior adult services
- ✍ **Support of Children, Youth and Families** – such as finding a tutor, mentor opportunities, protective services, and after school programs
- ✍ **Volunteer Opportunities** –like to providing donations and helping at temporary shelters

The specialist may offer to intervene on the caller's behalf or suggest contact information and solutions to other needs the caller may have mentioned.

United Way 2-1-1 includes a partnership between United Way of Southwest Alabama and Lifelines Family Counseling to house the United Way 2-1-1 call center. The Helpline, which had been providing information and referral services to the residents of the gulf coast region for years, will now be providing those services through the new United Way 2-1-1 phone system. Chandra Brown, Executive Director of Lifelines Family Counseling Center said, "By having to remember only one three digit number, individuals who need help will now have easier access to our services." "As always, all calls are confidential and callers will receive help and answers to their questions from our qualified staff and volunteers who will oversee the call center.

About United Way of Southwest Alabama

United Way of Southwest Alabama and its 55 partner agencies help more than 125,000 local people each year. United Way has been an integral part of the community for over 80 years. The goal of United Way is to strengthen our community and improve lives in southwest Alabama by creating lasting positive change. For more information on United Way of Southwest Alabama, visit www.uwswa.org

About Lifelines Family Counseling Center

The Family Counseling Center of Mobile, Inc., a United Way agency since 1958, is poised to support United Way's leadership role in bringing 211 to southwest Alabama. The mission of the Family Counseling Center of Mobile, Inc. is: "to facilitate positive changes in individuals, families and communities by providing comprehensive education, referral and counseling services for emotional/social, emergency and financial problems."

About 2-1-1

Spearheaded nationally by United Way of America and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects callers with important community services and volunteers opportunities. 2-1-1 builds America's capacity to strengthen the way people access help and engage in civic life. In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established 2-1-1 as the nationwide number for non-emergency information and referrals. Currently, 2-1-1 is operating in 41 states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and serves approximately 150 million Americans - more that 65 percent of the U.S. population. Each state is responsible for planning and operating its own 2-1-1 system. For more information on United Way 2-1-1, visit www.uwswa211.org

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