



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LOCAL 2-1-1 CALL CENTER CELEBRATES ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY
OF BECOMING NEW YORK STATE'S FIRST 2-1-1 PROGRAM**

Rochester, NY (February 10) — One year ago, Senator Hillary Clinton and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter joined with local business and community leaders to announce that Rochester had become the first community to launch a 2-1-1 Call Center in New York State. Today, one year and more than 14,000 telephone calls later, 2-1-1 has become a vital community resource for people who need help but don't know where to turn.

2-1-1 is a free, confidential and easy to remember telephone number that connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community. 2-1-1 is a national program that reaches more than 110 million people (over 37% of the total U.S. population) in 32 states and the District of Columbia. Locally, the 2-1-1 program was initiated through the United Way of Greater Rochester and the 2-1-1 Finger Lakes Collaborative. The program was established in Rochester in January 2005 and was the first community in New York State to implement this service.

“Our local 2-1-1 program is well on its way to becoming the one number to call when you need any kind of help for non-emergency problems but don't know where to turn,” said Peter Carpino, president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Greater Rochester. “As the number of organizations providing specialized services continues to increase, people often find it frustrating and confusing to access the right community services to meet their individualized needs. 2-1-1 provides a one-stop service for this vital information.”

Carpino also announced today that, for the first time, customers of Verizon Wireless will now be able to dial 2-1-1 from their cellular phones. Carpino thanked Verizon Wireless, the first cellular carrier, and Frontier Corporation, the first major landline carrier to offer 2-1-1 access, for their support of the program.

2-1-1 provides 24-hour, 7 day a week access to trained counselors ready to provide information and referrals to human service agencies and programs throughout the area. 2-1-1 responds to questions about mental health issues, crisis counseling, emergency food, shelter, clothing, or other health and human service needs, connecting callers to local organizations and resources that can best meet those needs.

2-1-1 is operated locally through the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI)-Goodwill Industries of Greater Rochester, Inc. who acquired the program in May 2005. With an existing and highly successful Call Center already in operation, ABVI-Goodwill's acquisition of 2-1-1 provided a unique opportunity for the agency to collaborate with the United Way and other community organizations to continue to offer this vital community resource and also enhance the mission of ABVI-Goodwill.

"The very simple goal of 2-1-1 is to assist callers in finding the help and answers they need as quickly as possible," said A. Gidget Hopf, Ed.D., president and chief executive officer of ABVI-Goodwill. "This important collaborative effort will continue to make these services available to those in need, and will also provide a number of new employment opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired in our community."

In its first year of operation, 2-1-1 has logged 14,401 calls, connecting these callers with vital health and human services. Of that total number of incoming calls, 27% involved requests for information to address a person's basic needs, including emergency shelter, food, housing assistance, transportation, and utility assistance. An additional 17% of calls related to legal and criminal justice issues; 13% involved information about organizational and community services; and 12% requested information about local health care resources. Other calls requested information and referral for issues involving individual and family life, mental health services, environmental concerns, education, and others.

"We are very pleased with the first year of operation, and while we've had a great start, we still have so much more to do to fully evolve 2-1-1 as the number to call when you need help but don't know where to turn," added Hopf. "We're looking forward to that challenge and are very excited about what the future holds."

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