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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2-1-1 DAY ON FEBRUARY 11 CELEBRATES HUMAN SERVICE HELP LINE

New Milford, PA— Sunday, February 11th is PA 2-1-1 Day. This is a day to celebrate all of the life-changing ways United Way’s 2-1-1 help line services the residents of Pennsylvania, and to encourage more to utilize the service available to them.

2-1-1 is the free, confidential, 24-hour information and referral service that connects 97 percent of Pennsylvanians with all the health and human services available to help. In 2017, over 199,000 Pennsylvanians turned to 2-1-1 for help.

“People reached out to 2-1-1 to find information on basic needs, like heating or utility assistance, abuse, eldercare, or to find the closest food bank,” said Kim Merithew, Director of Corporate and Community Giving at United Way of Susquehanna County. “But they also called for everyday information like where to take their child for developmental screening, or how to locate job training or how to schedule free income tax filing assistance.”

Locally, a father of five contacted 2-1-1 as he had recently lost his job and was in need of financial aid paying rent and feeding his family. He was connected with local agencies who offered compassionate support and put him in touch with agencies that could help him find employment.

In 2017, the top five needs 2-1-1 connected Pennsylvanians with included electric service payment assistance, volunteer income tax assistance (VITA) programs, rent payment assistance, food pantries, and gas service payment assistance. 2-1-1 also partners with Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and has been activated in times of emergencies, such as a substantial snowstorm or other natural disaster, to assist residents in need.

2-1-1 information and referral specialists are trained to listen, assess the situation, ask the appropriate questions, and then refer the caller directly to the human services that will comprehensively address their needs. The 2-1-1 specialist explains how to access those services, availing a translation service for over 170 different languages, if needed.

United Way of Susquehanna County has been providing referral services since February 2015 thanks to the generosity of donors and became a part of the national 2-1-1 program, which was launched by United Way in Atlanta over 20 years ago. The user-friendly, three-digit 2-1-1 number now serves more than 283 million Americans—more than 90% of our population—in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

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