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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Holiday Stress Leaves Many Feeling Overwhelmed Southern Litchfield County Residents Find Help by Calling 211

DANBURY, CT (December 21, 2007) – The holiday season is in full swing and a recent widower is looking for a social group to join; a single mother receives a gas shutoff notice; a teenager has problems at home with a father who drinks, and needs someone to talk to. These are just some of the problems facing many who have made calls to 211 in Connecticut. Alone, they are profound issues within any person’s life. Add to them the holiday season and the financial or emotional strains that can arise, and it may be enough to push someone over the edge.

Dr. Michael Stern, a clinical psychologist in Brookfield, notes that “holidays can be a stressful time as tensions within relationships are heightened and financial or physical demands are placed upon us. It’s important for people to seek help and support if they’re feeling isolated or overwhelmed.”

211 Can Help

Established in 1976 between the State of Connecticut and the 24 local United Ways, 211 Infoline is a statewide 24-hour telephone information and referral service that provides free community referrals and crisis intervention to anyone in Connecticut. It serves more than 300,000 people across Connecticut annually, and maintains a computerized database of 4,300 health and human service agencies offering 38,000 services and 7,500 licensed child care facilities. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with multilingual call specialists and TDD access available.

Connecticut residents call 211 for many different types of help. Professional call specialists help callers with such complex issues as substance abuse, gambling, domestic violence programs, suicide prevention, financial problems, and much more. Other callers may simply be looking for volunteer opportunities. By dialing 211, a caller is connected with a 211 call specialist who helps the caller assess their situation and find the community services in their area that can assist them.

Residents of Southern Litchfield County placed over 3,500 calls to 211 during the last year, with utility assistance being the highest requested service. Other requests for information and referrals included temporary financial assistance, shelter, subsidized rental housing, food, healthcare and legal issues.

“The 211 service is not only a valuable informational resource to people within our community but it is also a barometer of need that gives us an accurate read on the individual and family issues in our area,” said June Renzulli, CEO of United Way of Western Connecticut. “We all know from our own experiences that the holidays can be challenging. 211 can help those who need it to get help.”

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The United Way of Western Connecticut was formed on July 1 with the merger of United Way of Northern Fairfield County, Housatonic/Shepaug United Way, and United Way of Stamford. It will distribute close \$4 million to benefit human service programs and community initiatives within the three regional areas of Northern Fairfield County, Southern Litchfield County, and Stamford. The towns covered within these regions are Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Kent, New Fairfield, Newtown, New Milford, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Sherman, Stamford, Warren and Washington.

The United Way of Western Connecticut is a leader in mobilizing resources to improve lives and our communities. They bring together community leaders, nonprofit organizations, volunteers and businesses to focus on the most pressing needs in our community and provides the resources – human, technical and financial – to get to the heart of problems.

2-1-1 in Connecticut, established in 1976 between the State of Connecticut and the 24 local United Ways, is a statewide, 24-hour telephone information and referral service that provides free community referrals and crisis intervention to anyone in Connecticut. It serves more than 300,000 people across Connecticut annually, and maintains a computerized database of 4,300 health and human service agencies offering 38,000 services and 7,500 licensed child care facilities.

2-1-1 across the U.S. serves approximately 196 million Americans - over 65% of the US population; 212 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 41 states (including 19 states with 100% coverage) plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. Canada has an additional 5 locations.