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UNITED WAY AGENCIES COLLABORATE TO FIGHT POVERTY

United Way's stronger focus on poverty reflected in \$13.7 million distribution to local nonprofits

MEMPHIS, TN – The United Way of the Mid-South's Board of Directors made a bold move to solidify the iconic organization's historic realignment of its focus toward winning one lasting battle – the fight against poverty. Friday, July 15, 2016, United Way announced the distribution of \$13.7 million in resources to nearly 80 local nonprofit partners throughout eight counties. The Board's funding decisions also sharpened the organization's strategic move to effect broader community impact, in addition to providing critical support for high-performing agencies.

Within this year's allocations was a significant shift of \$634,000 specifically geared toward activation of a new strategic solution to move individuals and families out of poverty. Funding priorities supported the creation of a social services system of care among agencies uniting to develop a connected matrix of programs currently addressing low income families. This new initiative, "Driving the Dream," will work with individuals at or below the poverty level, to plot their own path to success and financial self-sufficiency, and then fuel and accelerate a functional approach toward attainment of their dream.

In this developing client-centered, goal-based, collaborative network, staff members of agencies now providing excellent one-off services are being trained to provide a knowledgeable handoff to other agencies, when such a referral is needed to advance persons further toward better education, financial stability and health. "Driving The Dream" will provide a no-wrong-door approach that will help close gaps in outreach services for persons in poverty. This approach will also assist nonprofits in leveraging their resources through collective action; uniting under a common agenda with shared data, metrics, goals and actions.

"We now know that it is often not the individuals, themselves, but the conditions or social determinants which have adversely impacted them that contribute to generational poverty. Our partner agencies are experienced in addressing those conditions, but we can move more effectively to give individuals the opportunity to overcome poverty when we become united in our efforts," said Rev. Kenneth S. Robinson, M.D., President and CEO,

United Way of the Mid-South. "No one dreams of living in poverty, so we are making a significant financial and social investment in creating for them a functional path out."

Grant allocation volunteers were encouraged and empowered to make decisions that would provide our community with an array of services and programs to address poverty. "The nonprofits in this network will also share in the benefits of becoming better equipped to swiftly connect people in need to the services that are most helpful," said Jean Morton, volunteer Chair of United Way's Community Impact work and Senior VP & Manager, Not-For-Profit & Government for SunTrust Banks, Inc. Organizations awarded the largest increases or shifts in funding include Alpha Omega Veterans Services which addresses homelessness, chemical dependency and job placement issues for local veterans; the LINC 2-1-1 information and referral network, The Salvation Army's Pathways to Hope model of services; and Knowledge Quest's family stability initiative. This year's grants signal the first phase of distributing funds that align with the organization's impact agenda, including "Driving the Dream."

United Way generates resources from individual donations and corporate gifts for its community impact priorities and its network of partner nonprofit agencies. Friday's announcement reflected a reinvestment of \$13.7 million into Mid-South communities guided by volunteer and expert panel-directed assessments, donor-directed decisions, and United Way campaigns run by the nonprofits themselves.

With its funded programs touching more than 600,000 lives each year, United Way is uniquely positioned to serve as the backbone convener of not only its partner agencies, but also of other public and non-profit social service providers and programs. These entities will facilitate truly moving the needle on poverty, one individual or family at a time. As a precursor to its refined focus, United Way officials met with leaders from its partner nonprofits over the last year to share details about United Way's stronger emphasis on poverty and to recruit agencies to align work around the issue. The organization's shift meets its goal to work towards solutions to priority issues and create real change in Mid-South communities.

Over half a century has passed and we are still fighting the War on Poverty. Data points to one million people in the Mid-South living in poverty, including 47% of the children in Memphis. United Way is stepping up to unite us all in this fight to identify lasting solutions, together. With the same aspiration that President Lyndon B. Johnson shared in 1964 to organize the nation to address poverty, United Way of the Mid-South is mobilizing community resources to yield long-term, sustainable, positive impact upon the poor in the Mid-South.

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