

NEWS RELEASE

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San Luis Obispo County Proclaims February 11th “2-1-1 Day”

San Luis Obispo, CA – In recognition of the positive health and human service information and referral services offered by 2-1-1 SLO County, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors presented a proclamation designating Friday, February 11th as “2-1-1 Day” to local volunteers and representatives of United Way. The 2-1-1 SLO County call center, provided by United Way of San Luis Obispo County, answered over 15,000 calls in 2009 and 2010.

2-1-1 SLO County is a free, confidential, easy to remember phone number available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week that connects San Luis Obispo County residents to essential community information and services such as food, shelter, help with utilities, transportation, childcare, elder assistance, counseling, job training, income tax guidance, educational resources, financial literacy, health services, veteran programs and more.

“We’re thrilled that the Board of Supervisors proclaimed February 11th ‘2-1-1 Day’. When a person calls 2-1-1 SLO County, their call will be answered by a live specialist that will ask a series of questions to determine what services, information or resources are needed to help them,” said Rick London, CEO of United Way of San Luis Obispo County. “The specialists are able to communicate in English as well as Spanish, so 2-1-1 SLO County can really help get information out to the harder-to-reach populations in our community.”

“Without 2-1-1 SLO County, callers can make an average of eight phone calls to different numbers before finding the services they need,” said Candy Markwith, president of United Way of San Luis Obispo County and CEO of Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center. “2-1-1 SLO County cuts through the red tape to save providers time and county departments’ money, while helping our local residents connect with the resources they’re looking for.”

The annual number of calls to 2-1-1 is on the rise, not just in San Luis Obispo County, but throughout California as it works through its economic recovery. Residents, emergency service providers, government entities, nonprofit agencies and businesses have come to understand how 2-1-1 connects people with the services they need. 2-1-1 call centers throughout California fielded over 1.4 million calls in 2010. Nationally, calls to 2-1-1 call centers totaled over 15 million in 2010. As of January 2010, 2-1-1 serves over 240 million Americans - more than 80% of the entire population - covering all or part of 46 states, including 34 states with 90%+ coverage, plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico.

However, even as the value of 2-1-1 SLO County continues to be demonstrated, limited resources remain a barrier to sustainability. That’s why United Way Worldwide is actively advocating for the passage of the “Calling for 2-1-1 Act,” federal legislation that would create a federal grant program to complete implementation of a nationwide 2-1-1 system. Locally, the 2-1-1 SLO County service has been funded until June 2011 with the help of key partners such as the County of San Luis Obispo and PG&E. United Way of San Luis Obispo County is working to gain local funding to be able to continue the operation of the service for another year.

“Every day, 2-1-1 SLO County is helping people to untangle the web of social and government services available in our communities,” said Bruce Gibson, Supervisor District 2. “We are proud to be able to partner with United Way of San Luis Obispo County to have a 2-1-1 call center serve our residents. While 2-1-1 SLO County still needs continued financial support locally from private donors, corporations, cities and the county to continue operating, we hope the Calling for 2-1-1 Act will someday secure this service and make it sustainable for the longtime benefit of San Luis Obispo County.”

To learn more about 2-1-1 SLO County visit <http://unitedwayslo.org/211>.