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United Way of Greater Toledo
Serving Lucas, Wood,
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A Year After Signed Contract, United Way 2-1-1 Reflects on Accomplishments

[August 27, 2020, TOLEDO, OH] – A year after local leaders endorsed United Way of Greater Toledo’s (UWGT) decision to pursue a 2-1-1 service contract with Gryphon Place, a health and human services nonprofit in Kalamazoo, MI, the organization’s leadership expressed satisfaction with their partnership and discussed an increase in community awareness.

From July 1, 2019 to July 1, 2020, United Way 2-1-1 had 77,545 contacts from individuals seeking help. This is a 46% increase compared to 2018 / 2019 data. The top five inquiries revolve around housing / shelter, food, utilities, clothing and employment / income.

“When I became President of United Way in early 2018, I saw so much potential for 2-1-1 to grow and play a meaningful role in the lives of those looking for resources,” said Wendy Pestrue, president & CEO of UWGT.

In 2016, UWGT engaged in a contract with United Way of Greater Cleveland 2-1-1, transferring its backend office operations and allowing local 2-1-1 employees, known as Community Resource Advisors, to work remotely from their home. This created substantial cost-savings for operations at UWGT.

After an increase in their contract with Cleveland, UWGT explored other possibilities, eventually signing with Gryphon Place, who also operates its own 2-1-1 service center.

“With Gryphon Place, we retained 12 remote Community Resource Advisor positions and gained a 2-1-1 Director, a Resource Database Specialist and a Coordinated Access Specialist, who oversees the placement of homeless individuals in our community. Today, we are offering everything a physical center would, but virtually,” said Pestrue.

Historically, United Way 2-1-1 was a resource only accessible via phone and through an online searchable database. The organization now boasts an improved 2-1-1 Database, as well as instant message and text message capabilities, also gained through their contract with Gryphon Place last year.

From September 2019 to June 2020, over 18,500 visits were made to 2-1-1’s online database through 211nwo.org. The average time searching for resources was nearly nine minutes. Over 14,000 of those searches were related to housing and shelter.

“When the pandemic first struck our community, 2-1-1 was at times receiving an upwards of 500 calls a day. I believe that, through our 2-1-1 community training sessions and marketing efforts, we’ve been able to make folks more aware of this important service,” said Pestrue.

Due to United Way 2-1-1’s expanded capabilities, the program has also undertaken contractual or community-based project work, such as scheduling 2,853 free tax preparation appointments, assisting with reserving 1,500 holiday meals for clients at Cherry Street Mission and training 873 individuals from local organizations on the benefits offered by 2-1-1.

“The flexibility of 2-1-1 is absolutely phenomenal. Whether it’s helping outside entities meet the needs of the community, reducing non-emergent 9-1-1 calls or serving as a critical lifeline when economic disasters strike, like what we’re seeing today with COVID-19,” said Pestrue.

United Way 2-1-1 is a free, 24/7, 365-day health and human service resource available to anyone in Lucas, Wood or Ottawa County. To speak with a Community Resource Advisor, simply dial two, one, one, text your zip code to 898-211, or visit www.211nwo.org.

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