

Press Release



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AT&T's \$250,000 Contribution to United Way Strengthens 211 Helpline and Ensures Local Nonprofits are Ready for Disaster

SAN FRANCISCO, February 28, 2011 – United Way of the Bay Area announced it received a \$250,000 contribution from AT&T, which has strengthened the ability of Bay Area nonprofits to assist people in times of disaster or emergency. The funds provide key nonprofits with the capacity to deliver critical safety-net services in an emergency and has expanded the capacity of the region's 211 community information line, so that Bay Area residents can quickly access those services.

United Way used the AT&T contribution to continue to train volunteers to handle increased 211 calls during and after a disaster; planned and implemented Bay Area disaster exercises; and purchased technology to expand 211 emergency capacity.

"AT&T's generous support helps United Way and our partners ensure that the Bay Area safety net continues to function after a disaster, so it can provide the services and supports that vulnerable populations will need," said Anne Wilson, CEO of United Way of the Bay Area. "This contribution also strengthens our 211 helpline, which plays a critical role in helping residents connect with community resources every day, as well as in times of crisis."

To bolster the Bay Area's disaster safety net, United Way's supports nonprofits that serve vulnerable populations—such as the elderly, low-income families, and non-English speakers—since those agencies typically lead efforts to help those residents access relief and recovery services during a disaster. Jointly supported by AT&T's contribution and United Way, the American Red Cross-Bay Area, SF CARD, CARD, Center for Volunteer & Nonprofit Leadership, and Thrive have created plans to continue operations, coordinate their response, and effectively mobilize volunteers after a disaster. These agencies also worked with more than 70 Bay Area nonprofits and schools, providing training to build their disaster preparedness.

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The AT&T contribution also enabled United Way to build the capacity of the regional 211 system to ensure it is both operational and ready to handle a surge in call volume after a disaster. 211 is the easy-to-remember, toll-free phone number that connects Bay Area residents with local community services. Trained, caring specialists answer calls 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week, and can assist callers in more than 150 languages. In 2010, 211 Bay Area answered more than 218,000 calls from people seeking assistance.

“In times of crisis, communication is vital -- that’s why at AT&T, disaster preparedness is a top priority,” said Loretta Walker, Vice President of External Affairs for AT&T. “We’re pleased to support the United Way of the Bay Area’s work to provide critical services and help ensure the health and safety of our communities.”

In times of disaster, 211 serves as a vital link for residents seeking information about evacuation sites, road closures, shelters, medical assistance, and more. 211 also alleviates the number of “non-emergency” calls to 911, allowing dispatchers to focus on calls about life-threatening situations. In addition, when the immediate danger is over, 211 is there to assist people as they put their lives back in order, providing information about temporary housing, food, mental health services and more.

About United Way of the Bay Area

United Way of the Bay Area is a nonprofit organization that creates pathways out of poverty. Our goal is to cut Bay Area poverty in half by 2020. We focus on helping working families and individuals, ensuring they can meet all of their basic needs, while creating opportunities for them to achieve lasting financial stability. We also invest in programs that empower the next generation for success. United Way convenes partners across sectors, advocates for policy change, runs community programs and educates residents about the issues most vital to a resilient community. Founded in 1922, United Way of the Bay Area serves Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Solano Counties. For more information, visit www.uwba.org.

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