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United Way Launches New Impact Model

“Steps to Success” shifts strategic approach to bring about greater tangible impact

Richmond, Va., August 22, 2017 – As part of a new focus on empowering individuals as the foundation for effecting comprehensive, systems-wide change, the United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg today announced the launch of a new strategic framework designed to help people overcome barriers to prosperity and provide the greater community an opportunity to contribute to that impact.

Built on a foundation of research, best practices and sets of metrics for gauging improvement – and with the support of individuals, businesses and governments across the region – *Steps to Success* lays out a strategic matrix of nine priority areas, issues that represent a sequential set of challenges that are best addressed by empowering individuals, families and older adults to reach higher, live better and share in the region’s quality of life.

“The creation of this new strategic framework, many months in the making, represents a critical turning point, not only for United Way, but for the community’s approach to improving our region’s quality of life,” said James Taylor, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg. “The *Steps to Success* model is a culmination of what we have learned over time. It is nothing short of a strategic renaissance, and with the community’s support, we know it will help bring about lasting and meaningful change.”

The nine steps of the new impact model include:

- ***Basic Needs Met: Food Safety, Housing.*** With the number of people living below the poverty line increasing by 63% from 2000 to 2015, many people are at risk being without basic needs.

- *Born Healthy.* The path to prosperity begins at birth. While the birth of babies with low birth weights declined slightly from 10% in 2005 to 8.7% in 2014, the region has seen an 83% decrease in teen pregnancies from 2000 to 2015.
- *Prepared for Kindergarten.* One in seven children in the Richmond region start school without the literacy skills needed for kindergarten, putting them at risk of achieving future developmental milestones.
- *Grade-Level Reading by 3rd Grade.* According to the spring 2016 SOLs, one in four (23.6%) third graders are not reading at grade level, making them far less likely to graduate high school on time.
- *Middle School Engagement.* Success in middle school keeps students on track for on-time graduation, but 42.7% of Richmond city eighth graders are failing their SOL reading (spring 2016).
- *High School Graduation.* The Richmond region has seen an uptick in the percent of high schoolers graduating on time, up from 81.7% in 2009 to 90.1% in 2016. Juvenile arrests are also way down, dropping from 30.1% in 2013 to 19.6% in 2016.
- *College- or Career-Ready.* One in five (19.3%) of Richmond area adults are currently not in the workforce, lacking the education and job skills that make them more employable.
- *Financial Well-Being.* Covering basic needs is not enough. Families and individuals need sufficient income to avoid debt, build savings and prepare for unanticipated expenses. And yet, 27.3% of people in the Richmond region live below 200% of the poverty line, up 5.1% since 2000.
- *Connected & Healthy Older Adults.* Older adults must not only be physically and emotionally healthy, but also financially secure and socially connected. More than one in four (28.9%) of adults 65+ live alone.

United Way directly serves these priority areas through its various internal programs as well as through its support of dozens of regional agencies and nonprofit organizations whose front-line services are aligned with the nine areas of the new *Steps* model. The combined programs serve 11 localities in Greater Richmond, from Goochland to New Kent and Hanover to Dinwiddie.

“The *Steps to Success* model has the potential to connect the larger community to United Way’s important work,” said Victor Branch, Richmond region market president for Bank of America and the 2017 United Way campaign chair. “It is a great example of how our collective efforts to meet the basic needs of Richmond’s residents can help improve people’s lives.”

About the United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg

Established in 1924, the United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg empowers individuals and addresses systemic problems to provide everyone with a clear path to success. The organization provides opportunities for those who care about their neighbors and the region's quality of life to give, volunteer and advocate for a better community. More information at yourunitedway.org.

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