

- I'm so pleased to see United Way's 2-1-1 initiative poised to receive extensive promotion in our community so that more people are aware of this vital service.
- You may not be aware that 2-1-1 is a national effort being led by United Way of America along with the more than 1,300 individual and independent United Ways across the country.
- A national effort is already under way in partnership with the federal government to get the \$150 million necessary to assist all 50 states with implementing and sustaining 2-1-1 statewide.
- Currently, the 2-1-1 Act is making its way through Congress and enjoying bi-partisan support with leadership from such legislators as Senators Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY).

- And a national cost benefit analysis conducted by the University of Texas tells us the net value to society of a national 2-1-1 system approaches \$130 million in the first year and a conservative estimate of \$1.1 billion over 10 years.
- These are savings realized through a reduction in the number of 1-800 numbers, reduction in non-emergency calls to 9-1-1, savings in time, in recovery, in 24/7 service and in volunteer recruitment.
- Already 2-1-1 reaches about 107 million people – about 37 percent of the total U.S. population – in 30 states and the District of Columbia. But United Ways want it to soon reach 50 percent of the population. It was first launched by the United Way in Atlanta in 1997.
- 2-1-1 has been available in our community through FIRSTLINK for several years but now it's time to be

sure that everyone knows about this marvelous service.

- Thanks to 2-1-1, an easy to remember number, people in central Ohio can get the information and referrals for human services that they need – help that often is sought during a crisis. It’s particularly helpful for senior citizens, too.
- By using 2-1-1, you can identify a local food bank, locate a battered women’s shelter, find convenient child care services, access eldercare services and much, much more. Plus, using 2-1-1 can connect you to the information necessary to get you involved in the community through volunteer referrals and placements.
- We know that 2-1-1 works during horrible crises like Hurricane Katrina and, in fact, in communities hit by

that catastrophe, outreach and assistance were a great deal more effective where 2-1-1 existed.

- Again, thank you Clear Channel for utilizing all your communications outlets to make 2-1-1 a household three-digit number in central Ohio that everyone recognizes and feels comfortable using.
- Now, please welcome my good friend and an outstanding community leader, Franklin County Commissioner Paula Brooks.