



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Lupe Waitherwerch
520.903.3939
gwaitherwerch@unitedwaytucson.org

UNITED WAY APPLIES GRANT TO IMPROVE SNAP APPLICATION PROCESS

TUCSON, AZ (March 16, 2010) – In September 2008, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona (UWTSA) was awarded a \$665,763 participation grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to work with the AZ Department of Economic Security, AZ Department of Health Services and the AZ Health Care Cost Containment System to improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process. SNAP (the new Federal name for the Food Stamp Program) helps low-income individuals and families buy the food they need for good health. SNAP also assists clients in learning how to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.

The average household receives \$311.00 a month in SNAP benefits, bringing in more than \$773 million dollars annually to Arizona. Between September 2008 and 2009, SNAP caseloads increased by 37.3%, which placed added strain on the previous application system. With an improved application process, Arizona families can efficiently receive these benefits and help put federal dollars to work in our community.

The grant dollars are primarily being used to modernize and streamline the application process and eligibility system to improve overall customer service. “This grant gives United Way the opportunity to create lasting change in our community by helping to increase SNAP enrollment for all eligible citizens throughout Southern Arizona,” said Guadalupe Waitherwerch, United Way Supporting Seniors Program Manager. “With a more user-friendly and cost-effective application process, we will be able to provide more help to those families who are struggling to put healthy food on the table,” she added.

Modifications to the system include the installation of new technology that will ease the application process and also increase the efficiency of the government staff that processes the applications. The project is also supported by several local agencies, who will assist eligible populations with the application process in the comfort of their own neighborhood; thereby avoiding a visit to a government office.

The Community Food Bank in Tucson is offering assistance with SNAP applications on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Their office is located on 3003 S. Country Club. For more information, contact Heather Voelkel at 520.622.0525, ext. 240.

In Bisbee, AZ, the SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO), Area Agency on Aging is providing assistance Monday – Friday, by appointment only. Their office is located on 300 Collins Road. For more information, contact Graciela Murcio at 520.432.5301, ext. 205 or Kathleen Heard at 520.432.5301, ext. 208.



###

About United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

*United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona is working to advance the common good, creating opportunities for a better life for all by focusing on the three key building blocks of **Education, Income and Health**. United Way is dedicated to creating long lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of the most significant issues. Our focus areas include: helping children and youth achieve their potential, promoting financial stability and independence, and improving people's health. Living United means being a part of the change. **Give. Advocate. Volunteer. LIVE UNITED.** For more information about United Way, please visit unitedwaytucson.org.*

United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

330 N. Commerce Park Loop, Suite 200

Tucson, AZ 85754

Ph: (520) 903-9000 · Fax: (520) 903-9002 · unitedwaytucson.org