



United Way  
of Fresno County

**UNITED WAY'S  
AGENDA FOR CHANGE™  
2009**



**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.  
LIVE UNITED®**

## UNITED WAY'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE™

### MOBILIZING THE CARING POWER OF OUR COMMUNITIES

2009 is an exciting year for United Way of Fresno County as it brings the conclusion of a multi-year effort to strategically align the work, resources, partners, and funding of United Way for a community impact agenda of change. Advancing the common good with focused efforts in the areas of: Education, Income and Health, the building blocks for a good life. This is United Way of Fresno County's community impact agenda for change.

This agenda focuses on mobilizing the caring power of communities to give of their financial resources, advocate through United Way for the causes in which they believe, or volunteer of their time, talent and energy to bring long-lasting change to a community condition by addressing the root-cause of a problem and aggressively tackling that community issue.

The **Education Building Block – Successful Children Impact Council**, is focused on helping youth achieve their full potential, as children enter school ready to learn; to stay in school, and be prepared for the real world. Through the **Income Building Block –Financial Stability Impact Council**, individuals and families will learn to maximize income, gain and sustain assets, and increase financial resources and build savings. And lastly, the **Health Building Block – Healthy Community Impact Council** will help individuals and families achieve access and resources to gain and sustain good health, have access to healthcare and resources for a healthy lifestyle, and live in a healthy environment.

In addition to the work of United Way Impact Councils, United Way's Agenda for Change will be carried out through a variety of community-based efforts of collaborations, initiatives, partnerships, programs and projects. Some of these efforts include: 211 Central Valley Call Center, Adopt a Family, Advocacy, Americas Promise, Bank on Fresno, Central Fresno Weed & Seed, Central Valley Book Bank, Day of Action, Day of Caring, Emergency Food and Shelter Program, Resource Development Services Program, San Joaquin Workforce Funders Collaborative, Target Tree, Toys for Tots, VITA/EITC Program and the Women's Initiative.

Annually United Way is involved with more than 1500 community based organizations and agencies in the greater Fresno, Fresno County area. For more information on the work of United Way please call 2-1-1 (simply dial 2-1-1 as you would 4-1-1 or 9-1-1) and ask how you can get involved with United Way.

In a snapshot here is the 'Work of United Way in the Community'.

### UNITED WAY...LEADING TO A GOOD LIFE FOR ALL



2-1-1 Central Valley, a program of United Way of Fresno County (UWFC) connects our community to essential health and human services through free and confidential information and referral by phone specialists who can assist callers in English, Spanish, Lao, Thai, Khmer and over 140 other languages.

You can dial 2-1-1 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year from anywhere in Fresno County and be quickly connected to helpful resources in your community.

One call gives you access to health and human resources across the community – whether you need to get help for yourself, a member of your family or friend – or if you want to give help. Someone at 2-1-1 will help connect you to the services or information you need.

**Call for help in finding the services you need:**

- Where to go to get a hot meal
- Where to get free or low-cost health care
- How to find savings on medications
- How to access the SNAP Program
- Information on child care
- Help with care for aging parents
- Employment resources
- How to find a bed when you have no place to sleep
- How to get help for a drinking problem
- And much more...

Small businesses can look to 2-1-1 Central Valley as their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which serves to strengthen the business community by helping employees find the resources they need on a daily basis which increases work productivity.



**Adopt a Family**

A joint effort of the United Ways of Fresno and Community Business and Organizations in Fresno County, Adopt A Family works to fulfill holiday wishes for qualifying families. Last year, 28 families received a life changing wish fulfilled during the holidays. United Way links companies who desire to sponsor families from the community who are in need during the holiday season. Each company donates gifts, food and other necessities for their adopted family. Referrals for this program come from elementary schools, Nonprofit Resource Centers and nonprofit agencies. All families receiving help during the holidays are personally met with and screened.

**Advocacy**

The United Way of Fresno County works in concert with the Public Policy Committee, a committee of the Board of Directors of United Way of Fresno County and the United Ways of California in the public policy. Advocacy is one of three strategies United Way's Call to Action: LIVE UNITED movement of GIVE ADVOCATE and VOLUNTEER. United Ways across California are working in a coordinated effort to advocate for health coverage for all of California's children and statewide expansion of 2-1-1 Information and Referral service. In order to achieve this goal United Way of Fresno County is working on strengthening and building relationships with business leaders and local policy makers. Together, our goal is to achieve health coverage for all of California's children and expansion of 2-1-1 Information and Referral statewide.

### America's Promise

Fresno is identified as one of the top 50 cities in America with a significant number of students dropping out before completion of a high school education. For this reason, United Way of Fresno County is partnering with local educational institutions, community based organizations engaged with our youth, government, concerned citizens and America's Promise Alliance to present a Dropout Prevention Summit in the fall of 2009. This event will spotlight the voices of parents, educators, students and others with the goal of creating a community action plan to address this highly critical issue.

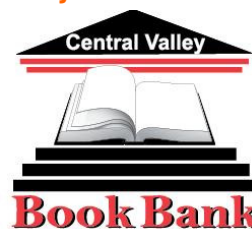


### Bank on Fresno

Fresno is one of five cities selected for Governor Schwarzenegger's Bank on California Initiative, a non-traditional approach to ensure every resident has access to mainstream financial institutions. Bank on Fresno is a joint effort of the Office of the Governor, Office of the Mayor, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, United Way and local Financial Institutions and Nonprofit Organizations. The goal is to start 10,000 unbanked individuals in Fresno on the path to financial mobility by helping them open a low-cost, starter bank account. United Way of Fresno County will serve as the fiscal agent for this initiative as well as local coordinating agency to help the collaboration meet and exceed the set goals.

### Central Valley Book Bank (CVBB) A Project of United Way of Fresno County

The vision of the Central Valley Book Bank (CVBB) is that every child will have access to an adequate supply of age appropriate books to help them become proficient readers. As a project of the United Way of Fresno County, CVBB provides free and low cost children's books to schools and nonprofit organizations servicing low income and disadvantaged populations. In 2007-2008 42,000 books were distributed for the purpose of developing a desire to read and improving reading skills while enhancing classroom and home libraries. United Way partners with The Richter Foundation, Fresno State University, Friends of the Library, Teacherwide, Zenith Insurance, Borders, Fresno Bar Association, Fresno Falcons, and private individuals to make this gift of reading a reality for many children in our County.



As nearly 60% of low-income households do not have children's books, the goal of the Central Valley Book Bank (CVBB) is to provide free and low cost children's books to schools and nonprofit organizations in an attempt to increase accessibility of reading materials for all children in the Central Valley. Books that are donated to CVBB are repaired, sorted and made available to qualifying organizations. Last year, the CVBB distributed 72,000 books.



### Day of Action

The longest day of the year, June 21st, has been declared the national Day of Action for the 1295 United Way's across the country. The Day of Action is a call to Give, Advocate or Volunteer on behalf of your community. Annually in June, United Way of Fresno County hosts a Day of Action for anyone who wants to make their community a better place to live. Watch our website [www.unitedwayfresno.org](http://www.unitedwayfresno.org) for details and how you can be a part. If you would like to

organize a Day of Action in your Fresno County community, please contact United Way. United Way's Day of Caring is a large scale community service day of volunteering to tackle large and small projects that help local nonprofit agencies serve people

### **Day of Caring**

This annual event brings together over 400 local volunteers and nonprofit organizations to accomplish fun projects and promote interaction between the community and those in need. Nonprofit organizations come up with projects for the Day of Caring including painting, gardening, reading to children, visiting the elderly, or planting a rose garden. Then United Way promotes the event to find hundreds or thousands of volunteers to fulfill the needs of the nonprofit organizations. The day begins at 7:30 a.m. with a free pancake breakfast for all volunteers. After breakfast, volunteers go to their assigned projects throughout Fresno County. Volunteers sign up for projects in advance based on their skills and talents.

### **Emergency Food and Shelter Program**

UWFC manages the EFSP grant providing funds to local nonprofit organizations that distribute food, rent/mortgage and utilities assistance to people who are facing economic hardships. In 2008-2009 Fresno County was awarded \$1,594,879. These dollars were awarded to nonprofit organizations to provide direct services of food, shelter and clothing to residents of Fresno County.



### **Resource Development Services Program**

Through generous support from the City of Fresno, United Way of Fresno County offers classes in grant making to all nonprofits serving city residents. In addition, a resource library provides printed and online access to information about funders, request opportunities and proposal development tutorials. This library is open by appointment to any local nonprofit. Utilizing a grant from the City of Fresno, UWFC provides Grant Writer training and support to many area nonprofits. The program also provides "after the training support" and workshops to help increase the capacity of nonprofits.

### **Target Tree**

Every year United Way receives fully decorated Christmas trees, thanks to our community partners from Target. United Way then places these trees with community based non-profit organizations; that have the opportunity to identify families they serve to receive these beautiful trees just in time for the holidays.

### **Toys for Tots**

United Way manages the distribution of toys for the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program. Toys are given to children during the Christmas holiday season by community organizations that receive the toys, and distribute them to needy children, lighting up the life of boys and girls in our communities.

Over 245 community organizations applied in 2007 to receive toys through this wonderful Marine Corps Reserve Program. 122,997 children received toys during the Christmas season in 2007. This year, we look forward to helping even more local children receive toys during the holidays. Visit our website [www.unitedwayfresno.org](http://www.unitedwayfresno.org) to locate where you can drop off your toys or volunteer to help with this project.

### United Way Campaign

United Way of Fresno County's annual campaign drive is in the fall of each year. During this campaign employees from companies and organizations in Fresno County are provided an opportunity to make a difference through annual giving. Because United Way is here, in your community, more than \$2,000,000 dollars come back to the local community based organizations who address the most basic health and human service needs in people. Through the United Way, Combined Federal Campaign and California State Employee Charitable Campaign the United Way of Fresno County supports 1,388 agencies.



### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

In partnership with the Internal Revenue Service and many other community organizations, United Way takes the lead in helping individuals on the pathway to financial stability through United Way's VITA/EITC program. The results of this program speak for themselves.



As a result of United Way of Fresno County's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance/Earned Income Tax Credit (VITA/EITC) Volunteer Program, more than \$4.79 million in tax refunds have been returned to Fresno County tax payers. Through the efforts of more than 260 volunteers who participated, VITA/EITC Volunteer Program offered no cost tax filing services to working individuals and families with household incomes of \$40,000 or less. Since February 1, VITA volunteers have completed over 4700 tax filings in Fresno County resulting in over \$4.79 million in tax refunds. Tax payers received an average return of \$1069.81 for working families.

Before the tax season starts, VITA volunteers have already put in 32 hours each of tax preparation training and certification by the Internal Revenue Service. Over 260 volunteers help staff 33 VITA sites throughout the tax season offering no cost tax filing assistance. This year two VITA sites were located at local high schools, one at Roosevelt High School and the other at McLane High School both staffed by high school student volunteers and school staff. This year marked the first year that home-based small business owners were able to receive no cost tax filing assistance for the schedule C. In all, VITA volunteers assisted 41 small businesses in completing and filing their taxes at no cost to the business owner, saving small business' thousands of dollars in professional filing fees.

VITA volunteers also were apart of several events throughout the tax season, such as the First Lady Maria Shriver's WE CONNECT YOU event held in Fresno for the second straight year drawing over 400 people in attendance held at Manchester Center. Several VITA volunteers spent an afternoon at the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians offering no cost tax filing assistance to our Native American community. Other special events included partnerships with Wal-Mart and the One Economy Organization bringing a mobile no cost tax services vehicle to shopping centers, neighborhoods, and community centers throughout Fresno County.

During the 2009 tax season, VITA volunteers completed an estimated 39,786 hours of service. At the State of California minimum wage, these hours represent over \$338,186 dollars. The IRS estimates that through the VITA/EITC Volunteer Program, tax payers in Fresno County saved over \$1.3 million in professional tax filing fees. In this economy saving families money and helping them keep every penny of their total refund is essential to building a financially stronger

community. The value VITA volunteers give back to tax payers and our community is tremendous.

United Way of Fresno County applauds all of the volunteers who made this season a huge success by giving time to the VITA/EITC Volunteer Program, advocating saving families millions of dollars, and volunteered to make a difference in our community. UWFC believes in the caring power of our communities to make long-lasting change and impact in community conditions. VITA volunteers are a great example of making this a reality. Congratulations to VITA volunteers!



### **The Women's Initiative**

Across the country Women's Initiatives are mobilizing circles of influential women to become powerful forces in their communities through philanthropy, education and advocacy by working together to build stronger, safer communities. Mothers and daughters, sisters and friends, colleagues and co-workers are making an impact through United Way and their involvement with The Women's Initiative.

The mission of The Women's Initiative is to organize an influential circle of women who strengthen our community through a focused investment of time, talent and treasure to address an urgent community issue of particular concern to women and girls and who leave a legacy for future generations.

In Fresno County, The Women's Initiative has taken on the monumental task and challenge of tackling one of the largest systemic problems in our county...substance abuse. A problem they found to cut across every socio-economic, race, and geographic area in the county. A problem that can be identified as one of the root causes of homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, lack of educational achievement, gangs and violence.

This influential group of women business and community leaders set an initial financial goal of raising \$100,000 to address the county-wide problem of substance abuse and identified three strategies to frame their efforts.

- 1.) To support Spirit of Woman, a community based organization already making a difference in the lives of women affected by substance abuse. This organization has an 84% success rate in helping women and their families achieve independence from a life of addiction and becoming a productive member of society.
- 2.) To educate the community at large about the issues facing Fresno County families and children with regard to substance abuse.
- 3.) To start a mentoring program, Women In the Next Generation, (WINGS) encouraging young women leaders to develop a sense of commitment and giving back to their community.

The Women's Initiative is chaired by Fresno County Supervisor Susan B. Anderson and Lynne Ashbeck, Council Member with the City of Clovis.

▪United Way of Fresno County ▪4949 E Kings Canyon Road ▪Fresno, CA 93727 ▪559.244.5710  
▪www.unitedwayfresno.org ▪2-1-1