

Contact: Paul Mina
Phone: (888) 811-3291 ext. 4824
Direct: (508) 370-4824
Fax: (508) 875-8862
Email: Paul.Mina@uwotc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 16, 2017

Lt. Governor Polito to Announce Merger of Call2Talk with Mass2-1-1
Call2Talk becomes part of the state-wide Mass2-1-1 Platform
2017 Marks 20th Anniversary of 2-1-1 Nationally
Grand Re-Opening Ribbon Cutting Of The Pearl Street Cupboard & Café At Park

Framingham, MA – Last weekend, the United Ways in Massachusetts joined United Ways across America in celebrating National 2-1-1 Day, calling attention to this free comprehensive Information & Referral Service. 2-1-1 has been in operation in Massachusetts since 2006 and nationally is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2017. As part of the celebration here in Massachusetts, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito will be in Framingham on Wednesday, February 22nd to announce the merging of the United Way's Call2Talk mental health and suicide prevention line with the statewide Mass2-1-1 Information & Referral platform. The Lt. Governor will also be presenting a Proclamation by Governor Charlie Baker declaring February 11, 2017 as 2-1-1 Day in the Commonwealth. Mass2-1-1 is funded by all 19 United Ways in Massachusetts and by the Commonwealth through three independent contracts.

Last year Mass2-1-1 received more than 110,000 calls and answered over 250,000 web queries from residents of the Commonwealth seeking resources. During severe weather and a wide range of other emergencies, Mass2-1-1 call takers are always ready to answer calls live, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

February 11th marked National 2-1-1 Day in recognition of the free, user-friendly phone and online system that serves over 90% of America's population. 2-1-1 call takers across the country connect some 16 million people each year to critical resources, information and services in their communities.

People call 2-1-1 or search its online database looking for resources to meet basic needs like heating or utility assistance, shelter, emergency help, or to find the closest food pantry or hot meal program. They also call for everyday important non-emergency needs, such as developmental screening for a child, affordable childcare, home health care for a family member, job training or free tax filing support.

2-1-1 was launched by United Way 20 years ago as a free way to connect people to essential local resources. Today, 2-1-1 is available in all 50 states, plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. In Massachusetts, 2-1-1 service is available statewide, in all 14 counties, serving 100% of the state's population. "Mass2-1-1 is an essential tool for helping people take better care of their families and makes more efficient use of a community's nonprofit and public resources," said Gary Lever, Vice President of Mass2-1-1. Recently, Mass2-1-1 has added United Way's **CALL2Talk** mental health and suicide prevention hotline to its menu of services, so that those who are depressed, isolated, or despondent have someone to call to talk about their feelings.

So what happens when you call Mass2-1-1? When you dial 2-1-1 (a free call from any phone), the call is routed to a trained Information & Referral Specialist who helps identify your need(s), then refers you to relevant human services, health or education resources in your area. For example, in the case of an employee who has recently been laid off or whose hours have been reduced, the Specialist will search a comprehensive database and may share information about unemployment benefits, job search options, food stamps, food pantries, mortgage or rent help, utility assistance, counseling, and other available resources. Mass2-1-1 answers the phone in over 150 languages.

Mass2-1-1 is a program of the United Ways in Massachusetts and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. According to Mass2-1-1 CEO Paul Mina, “the partnership between the United Way and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ensures that Mass2-1-1 will have sustainable funding for the foreseeable future. The mission of Mass2-1-1 is to ensure that Massachusetts residents get accurate and helpful information the *first time* they call.”

Mass2-1-1 is the official hotline in Massachusetts for Children Requiring Assistance and the Runaway Assistance Program through a contract with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. It is also the official hotline for Childcare Resources in the Commonwealth under contract with the Department of Early Education and Care, and is the official hotline for Emergencies and Disaster Response under contract with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

In addition to commemorating Mass2-1-1, the Lt. Governor will officially cut the ribbon for the grand reopening of the United Way of Tri-County’s Pearl Street Cupboard & Café, which recently relocated to their new home on Park Street. The Pearl Street Cupboard & Café at Park is the fourth largest food pantry in Massachusetts and the largest in MetroWest providing over 22,000 hot meals and distributing over 2 million pounds of food to over 4000 Framingham families representing over 17,000 individuals in 2016.

The United Way is a community building organization dedicated to brining people together to care for one another. The United Way provides programs and services, connects volunteers, strengthens agencies, teaches social responsibility, and meets the critical needs of the community with the help of people like you. The United Way of Tri-County, headquartered in Framingham, is under contract with Mass2-1-1 Inc. to provide 2-1-1 services for the citizens of the Commonwealth 24/7, 365 days a year.

Mass2-1-1 Inc. is a subsidiary organization of the United Ways in Massachusetts charged with providing the citizens of the Commonwealth with correct, timely and accurate information the first time they are called or searched.

Call2Talk a mental health, emotional support and suicide prevention hotline. It is a program of the United Way of Tri-County that is now part of the Mass2-1-1state-wide platform.

###