

United Way Blackhawk Region

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Blackhawk Region**



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MEDIA RELEASE

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United Way Blackhawk Region connects community to 211

(BLACKHAWK REGION) – Every day, people across our region are struggling but don't know where to turn for help. United Way's 211 is free, accessible 24/7/365, completely confidential and available in more than 180 languages.

To educate and engage local stakeholders on the function and benefits of the information and referral helpline, United Way Blackhawk Region hosted a free "lunch and learn" event at the Pontiac Convention Center in Janesville on Wednesday, August 21.

"United Way is thrilled to convene more than 130 community partners, including local law enforcement representatives, health care providers, educators, social service professionals, elected officials, and faith-based leaders, so together we may better understand, promote and utilize 211," said Mary Fanning-Penny, President & CEO of United Way Blackhawk Region. "Our investment in 211 is yet another example of United Way donor dollars and resources in action, as we work to address the diverse needs of our region."

By connecting people in need with the best resources available to them, 211 helps make the social services ecosystem more efficient and effective so resources can go farther.

Guest presenter and Director of 211 Rachel Gundacker reported, "Through 211, people can access information and referrals on crisis support, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance assistance, stable housing and utilities payment assistance, employment services, veteran services and childcare and family services." Gundacker continued, "No matter the situation, the highly trained specialists at 211 listen, identify underlying problems, and connect people in need with community resources and services that can help to improve their lives."

At the event, Gundacker conducted a live demonstration of the newly redesigned 211 website, discussed the launch of Wisconsin's addiction recovery helpline, and highlighted availability of 211's new text platform.

211 is operated and funded, in part, by United Ways across the country including United Way Blackhawk Region. In 2018 alone, 211s in the U.S. answered more than 11 million calls. Rock County residents placed more than 3,000 calls to 211 last year. Communities with the highest call volume were Beloit, Janesville, Edgerton, Evansville and Milton, respectively. The top Blackhawk Region

referrals by need were: electric service payment assistance, rental payment assistance, food pantries, community shelters, and homeless motel vouchers.

United Way officials believe unlimited opportunity exists for local partners to help publicize 211 and improve the community's awareness of the 24/7 information and referral service. Fanning-Penny added, "To demonstrate United Way's renewed commitment to marketing the free helpline, I'm excited to announce a new advertising campaign which will launch with 211 bus wraps in Janesville yet this year, as well as in Beloit early 2020."

All it takes to connect with a 211 specialist is a toll-free call by dialing 211, text your zip code to 898211, or visit 211wisconsin.org to conduct a key word search of the extensive database. Social service providers interested in registered their programs with 211 may also dial 211 or visit 211wisconsin.org for more information.

About United Way Blackhawk Region

United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community. We win by Living United, by forging unlikely partnerships and by finding new solutions to old problems; by mobilizing the best resources; and inspiring individuals to join the fight against a common foe, each community's most daunting social crises. United Way Blackhawk Region Lives United against poverty, family violence, hunger and homelessness to name a few, by providing community grants and resources to 54 human services programs at 29 nonprofit agencies in Rock County, Wis. and northern Winnebago County, Ill. More information is available at LiveUnitedBR.org.

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