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## Orange County United Way Announces Launch of Health/Childhood Obesity Prevention Component of FACE 2024

*Organization seeks grant proposals from qualified community partners in effort to increase by one-third the number of healthy Orange County youth by 2024*

**IRVINE, CA (September 15, 2014)** – Orange County United Way announced today that it will begin issuing grant proposals for qualified Orange County-based community, non-profit and public human service organizations as it launches the Health/Childhood Obesity Prevention element of its 10-year FACE 2024 community-wide action plan.

FACE 2024—an acronym for **F**und, **A**dvocate, **C**ollaborate and **E**ducate, the methods employed to achieve the community-wide action plan's objectives established by United Way last year following an 18-month stakeholder engagement process—addresses four key issues: Education, Income, Health and Housing. The specific goals of the plan are to:

- Cut the county's high school dropout rate in half
- Reduce the percentage of financially unstable families county-wide by 25 percent
- Increase the number of our community's healthy youth by one-third, as measured by childhood obesity rates
- Cut in half the percentage of homeless and housing-insecure children in Orange County

Phase 2 of United Way's FACE 2024 funding process focuses on identifying organizations, collaboratives, schools and government organizations for programs or models that are focused on reducing childhood obesity. Specifically, United Way is targeting programs that include increased physical activity and encourage healthy eating habits, along with programs that include parental and community engagement.

The timing for the launch of United Way's Health/Childhood Obesity Prevention efforts comes at a critical juncture for local youth. According to the 2014 Orange County Community Indicators Report, an average of 38.6 percent of Orange County students in the grades tested had unhealthy body compositions.

"Childhood obesity is not just a national epidemic, it is hitting home right here in Orange County. The statistics on childhood obesity are astounding and heart breaking, particularly in lower income communities," explained Carla Vargas, Senior Vice President, Community Impact for Orange County United Way. "The key to fighting this epidemic is through comprehensive outreach and education about healthy eating, increased physical activity and better access to healthy foods for low-income families and children, which are the key elements of this new phase of funding."

Organizations interested in participating in the Phase 2 funding partnership can download the RFP criteria and access the RFP application from [www.unitedwayoc.org/our-grants](http://www.unitedwayoc.org/our-grants) starting September 15. The deadline for proposal submissions will be October 24. Following United Way staff, volunteer and Board approval, successful grant recipients will be announced in January 2015.

Several collaborative programs driven by United Way are already having significant impact in Orange County. Last spring, United Way launched its new OC Reads effort, incorporating the “Read Aloud: 15 Minutes” public awareness campaign and grants targeting innovative early grade reading programs dedicated to ensuring children are reading at grade-level by third grade.

“Reading by third grade is a critical milestone and indicator on the road to high school graduation,” noted Orange County United Way President and CEO Max Gardner. “During our second pulse of this campaign to reduce the ‘summer slide,’ we formed partnerships with more than 70 school and community programs, libraries and pediatric offices. We are delighted that the program is receiving nationwide attention and that local communities throughout the entire county are participating.”

As part of FACE 2024’s goal to decrease family financial instability by 25%, United Way and its partners assisted over 15,000 low to moderate income taxpayers through its OC Free Tax Days campaign and as a result, returned over \$13 million dollars back to Orange County taxpayers and their communities. More than 500 volunteers participated in the program by donating their time and talent to assist with tax preparation. In addition to much needed tax refunds, participants also saved \$2.29 million in preparation fees.

United Way has also provided seed support to Waste Not OC, a new public-private partnership to reduce hunger and food waste. The project connects grocers and restaurants to food pantries that in turn, redistribute wholesome food. This innovative collaboration includes United Way, food banks, food distributors, health care agency employees and volunteers.

Concluded Gardner: “We’re confident that if more families have access to preventive education and resources encouraging healthy lifestyles, we’ll not only achieve our community goals for healthy youth, we’ll take the next step in realizing our vision of an Orange County where the next generation is thriving because our children have grown up with a solid education, healthy lifestyle, solid financial base and stable home.”

#### **ABOUT ORANGE COUNTY UNITED WAY**

Since 1924, Orange County United Way has been working to improve lives and strengthen our community by mobilizing the caring power of Orange County. To do this, we focus on the building blocks for a good quality of life: Education, Income, Health and Housing. By investing in Orange County’s children, families and individuals, we help them meet their most basic human needs, including food, shelter and medical care, while at the same time creating pathways to self-sufficient futures through education and training. In short, we help people help themselves. Through our new 10-year initiative “FACE 2024” (an acronym for **F**und, **A**dvocate, **C**ollaborate, **E**ducate), United Way is mobilizing local businesses, community organizations, governmental agencies and individuals to make a long-term measurable difference in the lives of local individuals and families. To learn more or to join our movement, visit [www.unitedwayoc.org](http://www.unitedwayoc.org).

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