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One in Three Households Struggle to Make Ends Meet United Way Study Documents Financial Stress for Working Families

REDDING, CA (July 24, 2018) — Thirty-two percent of households in Shasta County fail to earn enough money to cover a realistic family budget, according to a United Way study presented last week in Redding. That figure rises to 39 percent in rural counties surrounding Shasta, the study indicates.

“What’s amazing – and somewhat alarming – is that in more than nine out of 10 of those households, someone is working,” said Larry Olmstead, president & CEO of United Way of Northern California (UWNC). “Our residents aren’t looking for a hand-out. They need access to better-paying jobs; assistance in developing their skills so they can advance in the workplace, and financial supports that allow them to save more money and grow their financial assets.”

“The Real Cost Measure in California 2018” was presented at “Prosperity NOW,” an update on the Prosperity Initiative coordinated by UWNC in partnership with the County of Shasta. More than 30 community leaders from Shasta and Tehama counties participated in the July 18 event at McConnell Foundation, including Redding Mayor Kristen Schreder; Redding City Manager Barry Tippin, and Donnell Ewert, Shasta County director of Health and Human Services.

Pete Manzo, president of United Ways of California (UWCA), and Henry Gascon, director of policy and program development, explained that the Real Cost Measure was a more relevant indicator than other poverty measures, as it takes into account multiple basic needs including food, housing, child care, health care, transportation, taxes and miscellaneous spending.

The United Way study indicates that family financial stability is an issue throughout the state, with 33 percent of California households falling below the measure. The study grouped Colusa, Glenn, Tehama and Trinity counties together to create a statistically valid sample; 39 percent of residents in those counties are struggling to get by.

Nearly 16,000 households in Shasta County are struggling to get by. An adult alone can get by in Shasta on \$20,541 per year; two adults can make it on \$31,910; two adults an infant and a school-age child need \$60,638.

One of the most troubling findings was that 72 percent of single moms in Shasta County fell below the Real Cost Measure – nearly 2,500 households. And two-thirds of households with children under the age of 6 are struggling to get by. “This is a call to action,” Olmstead said.

Manzo, the UWCA president, called for advocacy efforts in favor of higher-paid jobs, income supports, educational attainment and programs that support both children and parents, among other approaches.

The Prosperity Initiative, launched in 2014, seeks to help families through programs that support financial stability, workforce readiness and youth enrichment.

For more information about the Real Cost Measure study, including interactive family budgeting tools, visit www.unitedwaysca.org/realcost.

About United Way of Northern California:

United Way of Northern California (UWNC) was established in Redding in 1953 and serves nine counties: Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity. Its mission is to fight for the education, income and health of all residents in the community. UWNC raises funds for non-profit agencies and operates two 24/7 human services helplines: 2-1-1 Shasta and 2-1-1 Tehama, collectively known as 2-1-1 NorCal. United Way also operates VolunteerNorCal.org, a volunteer match website. For more information about United Way of Northern California visit www.norcalunitedway.org.

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