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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RALLY FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES THURSDAY, OCT. 27

Prosperity Initiative campaign to launch at Market Street Promenade

REDDING, Calif. – A public “Rally for Youth and Families” in downtown Redding will kick off a three-year effort to improve lives in Shasta County through increased financial stability, job preparation and youth mentoring and enrichment.

The rally is scheduled Thursday, Oct. 27, 4-6 p.m. at Market Street Promenade. It is sponsored by United Way of Northern California on behalf of the Prosperity Initiative, which seeks to address the impact of economic hardship on families in Shasta County.

Redding Mayor Missy McArthur is scheduled to kick off the event, which will include non-profit and youth leaders speaking on behalf of Prosperity programs. There will also be a special performance by the South Shasta County Children’s Chorus.

The goal of the rally is to mobilize community support for Prosperity’s programs that will benefit youth and families. Improved financial stability is key for families seeking to achieve better health and educational opportunities. A United Ways of California study last year showed that 30 percent of families in Shasta County are struggling to make ends meet.

Jeff Avery, a former Redding Chamber of Commerce board chair and chair of the Prosperity Steering Committee, said the initiative is a timely one and is needed to “help break the cycle of financial instability.”

“I am especially excited about the Develop Our Youth initiatives that include mentoring and training, enrichment programs and the interactive youth website,” Avery said. “All of these projects will help the youth in our community to realize their full potential and the amazing opportunities that exist for them.”

United Way President & CEO Larry Olmstead agreed that the youth focus was vital, citing in particular the job training and mentoring projects. “We want to give young people every opportunity to find a path that ignites their passion,” Olmstead said. “The idea is to help

young people thrive so they create a future Shasta County where all are excited to live and raise families.”

The Prosperity blueprint was drafted as a community effort involving more than 100 individuals from the non-profit, government, faith and business sectors. They worked on committees to research, debate and devise proposals that were adopted last June at a summit of more than 30 community leaders. United Way coordinated the effort in partnership with the County of Shasta.

Avery now leads a 13-member blue-ribbon Steering Committee appointed to lead fundraising and implementation. Among its members are Kurt Starman, Redding city manager; Jake Mangas, Chamber of Commerce President & CEO; Kristen Lyons, CEO of the Shasta Family YMCA, and Dean Germano, CEO of the Shasta Community Health Center.

Prosperity’s financial stability programs would include *NorCal Bank On*, which would help low-income people access bank accounts and financial education; *SparkPoint Resource Centers*, which would serve as a one-stop center for a variety of financial services, and the introduction of a *Semi- Annual North-State Workforce Forum*, which would link job providers with transitional candidates seeking employment.

At-risk youth would be targeted by programs that link and grow existing youth mentoring programs; increasing funding for youth enrichment programs, and supporting crowdsourcing efforts that would fund enrichment opportunities for individual youths. Another program would introduce an interactive web portal, which would serve as a central hub for youth programs and services.

Funds will go to programs like the Shasta Family YMCA, which recently created Y Club, an afterschool teen enrichment and study program; and Catalyst Mentoring, which serves as a countywide hub for fostering mentoring relationships within our community.

UWNC has pledged to coordinate fundraising and implementation activities in support of the Prosperity Initiative. A three year-effort is envisioned, with a financial target of \$300,000 per year. Initial funding commitments have come from the City of Redding, County of Shasta, Redding Bank of Commerce, Tri Counties Bank and United Way itself.

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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 our communities. In addition to leading The Prosperity Initiative, 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. UWNC also operates Volunteer NorCal, a website that connects volunteers to agencies (volunteernorcal.org). For more information about United Way of Northern California visit www.norcalunitedway.org.