



## NEWS RELEASE

### Community Leaders Endorse Plan to Boost Shasta County Youth, Families

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REDDING, CA – More than 30 civic and non-profit leaders have endorsed a three-prong plan aimed at promoting financial stability, job readiness and life skills for Shasta County youth and families.

The plan emerged from the 1½-year Prosperity Initiative, coordinated by United Way of Northern California in partnership with the County of Shasta. Nearly 100 people from the non-profit, civic, faith and business sectors worked on committees to research, debate and devise the proposals.

Participants at the wrap-up Prosperity Summit, held last week at the Turtle Bay Museum, called for appointment of a high-level steering committee to guide implementation of the plan, including a community-wide awareness and fund-raising campaign.

“We now have a common-sense, concrete blueprint that will lead to more hope and better opportunities for county residents, and especially for youth,” said Greg Balkovek, chair of the United Way Board of Directors, who participated in the summit.

Other leaders present included Redding City Manager Kurt Starman, Redding Council Member Kristen Schreder, and officials from Shasta County, McConnell Foundation, Shasta Regional Community Foundation, Tri Counties Bank, Redding Bank of Commerce, Shasta Community Health Center, Shasta Family YMCA, Shasta College and other organizations.

Larry Olmstead, president and CEO of United Way of Northern California, said full implementation of the plan will require a campaign to raise more than \$1 million over the next three years. United Way is fully committed to leading that campaign, he said.

“This community can do this,” Olmstead said. “For each of our three planks, there are enthusiastic partners who already are laying the groundwork for program implementation and success.”

The Prosperity Initiative aims to help reverse key negative social indicators related to income, health and education in Shasta County.

A United Way study last year found that 30 percent of families made insufficient income to make ends meet. The latest County Health study prepared by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showed Shasta ranking No. 50 among the state’s 58 counties. The most recent American Community Survey showed a

median household income of \$44,651, compared to \$61,094 statewide. Some 18.8 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 31.4 percent statewide.

Among the initiatives endorsed:

**Increase Financial Stability:** NorCal Bank On would help low-income people access bank accounts and financial education. SparkPoint Resource Centers would provide one-on-one financial coaching and a one-stop center for a variety of financial services.

**Improve Workforce Readiness:** Funding would be provided to help scores of youth train for basic job skills, enhancing their employability. Periodic job fairs would link employees, transitional prospective employees and service providers.

**Developing Our Youth:** A major initiative would link and grow youth mentoring programs. Increased funding would be sought for youth enrichment programs and financial assistance so at-risk youth can access them. An interactive web portal would serve as a central hub for youth programs and services.

Several programs, including Bank On, should be ready for roll-out in the coming months, Olmstead said. The initiative would seek to pilot others, such as SparkPoint. And work on other programs, such as youth mentoring, already is underway.

Anyone interested in donating or assisting in fundraising should contact Phylcia Snow at [psnow@norcalunitedway.org](mailto:psnow@norcalunitedway.org). For more information on the Prosperity blueprint, contact Jonathon Miller, [jmiller@norcalunitedway.org](mailto:jmiller@norcalunitedway.org), or Larry Olmstead, [lolmstead@norcalunitedway.org](mailto:lolmstead@norcalunitedway.org). Snow, Miller and Olmstead all can be reached by phone at 530-241-7521.

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#### About United Way of Northern California

Established in 1953, UWNC serves nine North State counties: Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity. Its mission is to improve lives by mobilizing community resources in the areas of Education, Financial Stability, and Health. United Way raises funds for local non-profit agencies; operates 2-1-1, a 24-hour human services helpline; and connects volunteers to agencies through [volunteernorcal.org](http://volunteernorcal.org). For more information, visit [www.norcalunitedway.org](http://www.norcalunitedway.org).