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United Way Capital Area Sharpens Focus on Middle Schools

*\$3.4 million in Grants Will Fund and Drive Long-Term Community Change
in Three Focus Areas – Education, Income and Health*

AUSTIN, Texas – Oct. 19, 2010 – United Way Capital Area today announced plans for a pilot program at three area middle schools to increase academic achievement. The pilot program, dubbed Middle School Matters, is just one of the strategies included in UWCA's 2011-2012 Community Investment Grant (CIG) call for proposals which was released today (www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/CIG). The competitive grant process for \$3.4 million is open to area nonprofits with programs that best meet UWCA's goals in driving systemic change in three focus areas: education, income and health.

"We are sharpening our focus on middle schools as evidence shows that a student's academic achievement by 8th grade has a greater impact on college and career readiness than high school academic work," said Debbie Bresette, President of United Way Capital Area. "We've had great success with our early childhood education initiative – Success By 6 – in helping children enter school ready to learn and be successful in the classroom. This new pilot program will impact older students who are struggling and remove barriers which may impede their learning."

The pilot program will begin next fall at high need middle schools where a large percentage of students are at-risk for low academic achievement and come from low-income families. The three middle schools are Webb and Mendez Middle Schools, both in the Austin Independent School District; and Decker Middle School in Manor Independent School District.

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UWCA and partners selected to receive grants will deliver a wide-range of support services such as mentoring, tutoring, behavioral health treatment, parent education and quality afterschool programs to students. The CIG funding also will cover hiring a part-time program specialist to work hand-in-hand with school staff to coordinate services that are specific to best address a student's needs. Based on the success of the program, UWCA plans to replicate the strategies at other area middle schools.

A geographic focus also will be part of the Success by 6 program strategies as grantees are asked to provide a percentage of their program services in the St. Johns area, part of the Austin Achievement zone. UWCA's income focus area will now include financial education and incorporate the Bank On Central Texas program begun this year.

Nonprofits who want to apply must submit a Letter of Intent to UWCA no later than noon on Friday, Oct. 29. UWCA also will require applicants to submit an administrative/fiscal application by noon on Nov. 19; and a program application by noon on Dec. 15. Full details of all of the focus area strategies and the RFP are available online at www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/CIG.

About United Way Capital Area

United Way Capital Area is working hard to advance the common good by focusing on three key areas: education, financial stability and health – the building blocks for a good life. UWCA works to create measurable change that prevent problems from happening in the first place and that empowers people to improve the quality of life for themselves and others. Our vision for Central Texas is a community where all individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income and healthy lives. For more information, please visit www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org.

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