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United Way Announces Funding Award for Eviction Prevention and Diversion Services

Rochester – United Way of Olmsted County board of directors has awarded \$40,000 to Legal Assistance of Olmsted County to provide legal assistance to households facing eviction. The Eviction Prevention Program is a partnership between Legal Assistance of Olmsted County, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. United Way’s funding will be used to support eviction prevention and diversion services provided by Legal Assistance of Olmsted County, as well as a client housing fund that assists with court costs. This investment in our community is an important part of United Way of Olmsted County’s commitment to helping our community weather the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Economic instability in our community increased dramatically because of COVID-19,” said Emily Johnston, Vice President of Community Impact at United Way. “We also know that communities being hit hardest by COVID-19 and the attendant economic shocks are oftentimes those communities that were already burdened by housing costs. The burden has only intensified and increased in scope because of COVID-19. Even in normal circumstances, families without safe and stable housing struggle to meet school and work obligations and maintain their health. This must be a top priority for the overall wellbeing of people in our community during these unprecedented times.”

Both the Federal and State governments paused most evictions early in the pandemic. The federal moratorium has expired; however, Minnesota’s suspension continues. Local officials and legal experts are concerned that when the suspension eventually ends, there will be a tsunami of eviction filings that overwhelm the court system, legal aid organizations, and various emergency housing support funds. Legal Assistance of Olmsted County has already experienced a significant increase in applications for services so far this year, even with the eviction suspension still in effect.

“Housing stability in our community is more important than ever before, particularly in light of the pandemic. Our approach, working in conjunction with the courts and local landlord attorneys, is specifically designed to mitigate public policy concerns related to housing stability for individuals and families during the pandemic,” said Karen Fairbairn Nath, Executive Director of Legal Assistance of Olmsted County. “This funding is essential and allows us to provide critical legal aid to those facing an eviction.”

“Program investments of this kind are one of several strategies used by United Way to help people reach their potential,” United Way President Jerome Ferson said. “In the face of the ongoing crisis of

COVID-19 and the associated economic downturn, we continue to focus on the building blocks of a good quality of life: quality education, good health, a family-sustaining income, and meeting basic needs like stable housing. Olmsted County is a great place to live and raise a family, and as a community we have a long history of caring for one another. United Way is honored to be part of that legacy.”

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About United Way of Olmsted County

United Way of Olmsted County is a social change organization that fights for the education, health, and financial stability of every person in our community.

We do this in a variety of ways. We operate programs and provide shared resources that support the community, such as our 211 information and referral service or our Get Connected volunteer matching portal. We work collaboratively with partners from many organizations and walks of life to create system change and solutions that elevate our community more than any single program or organization could. We provide financial, technical, and volunteer support for programs that make a difference.

At United Way, we LIVE UNITED with the change-makers, risk-takers, and problem-solvers as we seek, find, and create lasting solutions to the challenges that face our community.