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UWM Celebrates 20 Years of 211 in Nebraska and 211 Day

Every hour of every day, someone in Nebraska is faced with a challenge and needs assistance. The 211 Helpline, housed at United Way of the Midlands (UWM), connects people looking for assistance to local programs that can help. And this year, in addition to celebrating national “**211 Day**” on **February 11**, 211 in Nebraska is celebrating 20 years – even though UWM has been taking calls to help those in need for over 40 years. The first 20+ years of calls used an 800-number known as “First Call for Help.” Then on February 20, 2002, UWM was awarded the 211 number for Nebraska.

The **211 Helpline** is an essential service offered to the entire state of Nebraska – all 93 counties – as well as SW Iowa. It provides free information and referral services to people who may not know how to find or access local programs to address their needs. It’s a safety net of health and human resources when it seems other avenues have been exhausted. After disasters occur and during the COVID-19 pandemic, 211 also plays an integral role in keeping community members updated and helping those impacted.

In 2021 alone, the 211 Helpline recorded nearly 250,000 contacts – a 40% increase from 2020 and 168% higher than 2019 – with callers’ top 5 needs being: Housing (54%), Utility Assistance (21%), Employment (5%), Healthcare (4%), and Food (3%).

With the ongoing increase in contacts, UWM is grateful to Senator Mike McDonnell and the entire state legislature, as well as other private and public funding, for their support of the 211 Helpline. Without their continued support, our work wouldn’t otherwise be possible.

Connected to more than 13,000 programs and services across Nebraska and Iowa, the 211 Helpline provides multiple points of access for those looking to receive assistance easily and confidentially. Via **ne211.org**, Nebraskans can access an online database of local health and human service programs, community services, governmental programs, and more. Iowans can find assistance via the existing **211iowa.org** site. Individuals can also access similar information via the 211 Nebraska/SW Iowa app, which is available on both iOS and Android devices – or by **texting their ZIP code to 898211** or **dialing 2-1-1** to communicate directly with a trained 211 Community Resource Specialist. Assistance is available 24/7 in over 240 languages using the tele-interpreter service and bilingual staff.

In addition, in celebration of 211 Day this year, UWM is raising money to support its work with

Help Me Grow Nebraska – a partnership with Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, Munroe-Meyer Institute, and others – to assist children with disabilities and developmental challenges, aged 0-8, and their families.

Those who would like to help support 211 and Help Me Grow Nebraska can donate at:

www.ne211.org/donate.

About United Way of the Midlands

For the past 99 years, United Way of the Midlands (UWM) has used its community-wide perspective to identify local needs that are going unseen or unmet – and how it can partner with corporate, government organizations, nonprofits, and donors to tackle them. Today, UWM remains committed to uniting our community’s caring spirit to build a stronger tomorrow. It invests donor dollars in more than 100 local nonprofit programs that, together, form a circle of support around our community. These programs are addressing pressing social and economic disparities and providing the essentials families need to thrive such as food, a safe place to go after school, and job support.

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