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AT&T Supports United Way of York County's Initiative to Engage Families to Improve High School Students' Success

York, PA (November 19, 2009) — AT&T* and United Way Worldwide (UWW) today announced that United Way of York County has been awarded a UWW/AT&T *Family Engagement for High School Success* grant of \$50,000 as part of a new initiative designed to help parents and caregivers get more involved in their children's education. AT&T has contributed \$2 million to the program nationwide through AT&T Aspire, a \$100 million initiative focused specifically on high school students' success and workforce readiness.

The United Way of York County is partnering with the York City School District to promote family engagement at William Penn High School. Over the past ten years, 1,411 students have dropped out of William Penn. Further, truancy, which is a risk factor for dropping out, is 46 percent. And, test scores need to be improved: Two-thirds of the 11th graders scored "basic" or below on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) reading test, and three-fourths were not proficient in math.

The AT&T grant will enable the United Way of York County and York City School District to develop parent groups, expand existing programs that address the underlying causes of students' failure, and utilize technology to engage parents in their children's education. These efforts will provide a comprehensive approach to increase the graduation rate by involving community organizations, faith-based institutions, social service agencies, the medical community, and the local library.

"By supporting innovative strategies that connect families with their children's education, we can ensure that York County's students achieve their best future," said J. Michael Schweder, president, AT&T Pennsylvania. "We look forward to working with United Way of York County on this initiative."

United Way in the U.S. has set ambitious national goals in health, income, and education – including cutting the nation’s high school dropout rate in half by 2018. The new family engagement initiative is part of United Way’s national strategy to meet that goal.

The United Way of York County spearheads efforts to promote high school graduation through partner agencies and other local programs that provide a range of services from high-quality early childhood education to after-school tutoring and mentoring programs to nationally recognized dropout-prevention strategies.

“Ensuring that every child is successful in school and life must be a priority for us all. The global economy and the shrinking workforce demands that we work together to solve this problem,” said Robert J. Woods, executive director of the United Way of York County. “United Way of York County appreciates AT&T’s support of our efforts to engage families to increase the graduation rate.”

For the past 18 months, United Way of York County, through its “Stay in School Initiative,” has researched the dropout problem and recently presented its findings and recommendations at a town hall meeting. For the past 10 years, 6,429 students dropped out of York County schools, an average of four children every school day. Students who drop out of school are eight times as likely to be in prison; indeed, 41 percent of the inmates in York County prison do not have a high school diploma. The annual cost of incarcerating an inmate at York County prison is three times greater than the annual cost to educate a student at a York County school, \$23,123 vs. \$7,835. The “Stay in School Initiative’s” recommendations are:

- Enhance the effectiveness of York County schools.
- Expand the work of the York County Truancy Prevention Initiative.
- Promote and foster supportive communities.
- Engage the business community.

“Keeping kids in school is essential to the future competitiveness of York County. That’s why I have joined with other York County educators, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders who are committed to tackling York County’s dropout crisis head on,” said state Representative Eugene DePasquale. “AT&T’s support of the United Way and our ‘Stay in School Initiative’ will help us achieve our goals and prepare our students and our region for success.”

United Way of York County is one of 15 local United Ways receiving a matching grant through the AT&T initiative to identify best practices for family engagement to boost high school graduation. The 15 sites will use funds to increase family-community-school partnerships to

build successful learning in high school. An additional five local United Ways will receive capacity building support for family engagement work.

This new initiative responds to recent research funded by AT&T and conducted by Civic Enterprises and Peter Hart Research with America's Promise Alliance, "*On the Front Lines of Schools*," where the voices of our nation's education practitioners reflected their outlook on the dropout crisis. One of the key findings of this research was that the majority of teachers (63%) and principals (51%) felt that increasing the involvement of parents would reduce the dropout rate.

To find the state and local United Way organizations most qualified for this project, AT&T and UWW developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) with four national partners: the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA); Communities In Schools; the Coalition of Community Schools; and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). The Harvard Family Research Project will oversee the evaluation of this program.

AT&T is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities, and improving lives. As part of this commitment, AT&T last year launched Aspire, a \$100 million high school success and workforce readiness initiative. AT&T Aspire is one of the largest-ever corporate commitments to address high school success and workforce readiness.

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About Philanthropy at AT&T

For 25 years, AT&T and the AT&T Foundation have been committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its philanthropic initiatives and partnerships, AT&T supports projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; and address community needs. As the AT&T Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2009, more than \$160 million was contributed through corporate-, employee- and AT&T Foundation-giving programs in 2008 alone.

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LIVE UNITED™ is a national campaign that provides resources designed to motivate people to give back to their communities. For information about the United Way of York County, or to look for ongoing opportunities to take action through giving, advocating and volunteering, go to <http://www.unitedway-york.org/>.