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### Monroe, Owen county agencies introduce new 2-1-1 initiatives

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H-T Report

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United Way of Monroe County and Area 10 Agency on Aging Friday urged awareness of the 2-1-1 Information and Referral service in Monroe and Owen counties and introduced new 2-1-1 initiatives locally and statewide.

The three-digit phone number connects people seeking services with the appropriate community organizations. Trained specialists answer each call and provide personalized and up-to-date information about local social service agencies. Free and confidential, 2-1-1 is available 24/7 and is a nationwide initiative, a press release from the United Way states.

Residents will soon see increased promotion of 2-1-1 around Monroe and Owen counties on billboards and Rural Transit buses.

According to Jessica Mace, community investment coordinator for United Way of Monroe County, “United Way is excited about the new 2-1-1 Ambassador program and the impact it will have in the community; 2-1-1 impacts real people in real situations. The Ambassador program will help spread the word about 2-1-1 and will help us connect more people with the services they need. We encourage you to dial 2-1-1, to tell others about 2-1-1, and to help keep the 2-1-1 Infolink database updated.”

Kerry Conway of Area 10 Agency on Aging noted that “Data on emerging needs and unmet needs is tracked in the 2-1-1 system and available to the entire community.”

The 2-1-1 service also enables disaster relief efforts to be more streamlined and effective. Nonemergency calls to 911 are reduced, and 2-1-1 connects those affected by the disaster, potential donors and/or interested volunteers with service providers.

Sue Gulley, executive director of American Red Cross — Monroe County Chapter, explained, “With the 2-1-1 Infolink service, the changing array of human service agency information is stored in one place, and friendly people at the other end of the line can direct callers to the best possible options for their particular situation. That’s the way it should work in every community.”

In 2010, 2-1-1 operators responded to 5,429 calls and made 10,659 referrals. Most callers seek help with health care, housing and utilities, food, and income support.

Community members interested in being 2-1-1 Ambassadors should contact Liz Jones at Area 10 Agency on Aging at 812-876-3383, ext. 532, or [ljones@area10agency.org](mailto:ljones@area10agency.org).

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## About 2-1-1

2-1-1 is a phone and online service that maintains a health and human services database used to facilitate connections between people who need services and those who provide them. 2-1-1's integrated set of resources and services are the best source of information about the hundreds of health and human service agencies and programs in Monroe and Owen counties. For more information, visit [www.211infolink.org](http://www.211infolink.org).

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