

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Abby Mathieu

abby@blenderadv.com

412-709-6149

304-281-8097 (cell)



United Way asks volunteers to help local students ‘Start Strong’

Volunteers needed at 19 schools to support kindergarten and middle school students

Pittsburgh, Pa. (Aug. 5, 2015) – United Way of Allegheny County, now part of United Way of Southwestern PA, in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development’s Ready Freddy Program and Pittsburgh Public Schools, will host events to cheer on local kindergartners and middle school students as they embark on their first day of school. Local leaders and members of the community will gather at 19 Pittsburgh Public Schools the mornings of August 31 and September 3 to celebrate the start of the school year, welcome young learners and encourage positive school attendance habits. United Way hopes to secure more than 350 volunteers for the Kindergarten Kick-Off/ Start Strong events.

Nationwide, teachers report nearly half of children struggle with the transition to kindergarten. Student attendance in September likely predicts their behavior for the rest of the year. To ease that transition and stress the importance of attendance, United Way makes Kindergarten Kick-Off/Start Strong an integral part of two of its major education-centric initiatives: Hi5!, which supports kindergarten preparedness and enrollment; and Be There, which promotes attendance in schools.

Additionally, research shows school attendance patterns are established during a child's first year in school; children who attend the first day of school are more likely to attend regularly.

“We hope to provide a memorable start to the school year for both first-time students and those returning to middle school,” said Lois Mufuka Martin, United Way’s new Chief Volunteer Engagement Officer. “We are relying on the support of our volunteers and community to demonstrate the importance of this milestone in the kids’ educational career and help get them off to a great start.”

Those interested in volunteering can find details regarding specific times and locations at <http://unitedwaypittsburgh.org/volunteer/opportunities/>.

About United Way of Allegheny County – United Way of Allegheny County, now a part of United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette & Southern Armstrong Counties, brings people together to tackle our community's most challenging issues, because no one person or organization can do it alone. United Way leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals and organizations to help people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change and helps children

and youth succeed, strengthens and supports families by promoting financial stability, ensures the safety and well-being of vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities, and provides county-wide access to information and referral sources meeting basic needs.

###