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**UNITED WAY HELPS ALLOCATE OVER \$200,000 IN EFS
GRANTS TO ONEIDA AND HERKIMER COUNTIES**

***Local Volunteers Distribute Funds to our Community's
Emergency Food and Shelter (EFS) Programs***

Utica, NY (April 22, 2009) — United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica Area has, with the help of two local volunteer boards, distributed a total of \$200,142 into Oneida and Herkimer Counties from awarded federal funds from the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, also known as EFS or FEMA, effective immediately.

“We can all be accountable for the success and growth of our community by lending a helping hand,” says Phil Hayne, Executive Director. “This year’s EFS grant allows us to recognize the need for food, shelter and utilities services in both Oneida and Herkimer Counties and gives us the opportunity to make a maximum impact with the grants provided.”

The Oneida County board of local volunteers distributed a total of \$155,732 to the following 13 non-profit organizations: Catholic Charities of Oneida County; Compassion Coalition; Emmaus House; Hope House; Johnson Park Center; Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency; Rescue Mission; Salvation Army; St. Joseph St. Patrick Mother Marianne; Utica Community Food Bank; and YWCA of the Mohawk Valley. Oneida County’s total 2009 EFS grant included an additional \$17,174 from the original grant of \$138,558, awarded by New York State’s set-aside committee to address some unmet needs in our community. This year’s set-aside grant is more than double the set-aside funds awarded to Oneida County in 2008.

EFS awarded Herkimer County a \$44,410 grant, distributed by the Herkimer County board of volunteers to the following four local non-profit organizations: American Red Cross Mohawk Valley Chapter; Catholic Charities of Herkimer County; Herkimer County Department of Social Services; and Salvation Army.

Although Valley United Way and United Way of the Greater Utica Area are merged and now United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area, each EFS grant is awarded by county, allowing for two local volunteer boards to each represent their county of residence. Each board is responsible for recommending the agencies to receive these funds and any funds available under this phase of the program. United Way provides the administrative staff and functions as the fiscal agent in this process.

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In 2008, United Way helped administer over \$145,000 in Emergency Food & Shelter grants in the Mohawk Valley - \$109,437 EFS grant (\$102,811 original EFS grant, \$6,626 set-aside grant award) funded ten programs throughout Oneida County, and a \$36,412 grant funded four programs throughout Herkimer County. These programs provided meals at local shelters and local food pantries, rent, mortgage and utility assistance, and emergency shelter services.

"I believe the significant increase in EFS grants awarded to the Mohawk Valley is a reflection on the greater need in our community," says Hayne. "Now more than ever, individuals seek emergency services and it is our responsibility as a community to support one another during these trying economic times."

For more information, contact the Michelle Tarnelli at United Way, 315.733.4691 x225 or michelle.tarnelli@unitedwaygu.org.

About United Way

United Way of the Valley & the Greater Utica Area is a local, independent non-profit organization funding area programs and services that address the most crucial local community issues. United Way's strength is its ability to improve lives by mobilizing its partners to create positive, sustained change in community conditions and to focus on results. For more information, visit www.unitedwaygu.org or call 315.733.4691.

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