



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2008

New Jersey's 2-1-1 Service Offers Help and Hope Under New Leadership **Laura Zink Marx Brings 25 Years of Experience to the Job**

Paramus, NJ September 24, 2008 – 2-1-1, a statewide network that connects NJ citizens with government, social service and community resources, is welcoming an experienced professional back to its ranks. Laura Marx was the first Director of Operations when 2-1-1 began the journey to roll out a statewide 2-1-1 system and was instrumental in setting the infrastructure that took the organization through its beginning years. Along with a keen and thoroughly supportive understanding of the 2-1-1 mission, Laura has built strong working relationships with key department and agency professionals in state government that began when the organization was in its infancy.

“The ability to work with every level of government as well as local organizations is essential to the success of 2-1-1,” explains Tom Toronto, Chairman of the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership and President of Bergen County’s United Way. “2-1-1 is a system that is designed to give residents in New Jersey a single access portal for information on everyday needs and concerns as well as essential facts about emergency preparedness and recovery. To do this we need to stay connected with programs, services and providers so that we can effectively capture current information about these resources in one database and have it available when someone in need calls.”

Laura brings with her 25 years of experience in various non-profit resource development and strategic planning capacities as a staff member and consultant. In addition, she worked for United Way of America and other non-profits developing training curriculum in volunteer recruitment, development and recognition, and delivered resource development training programs throughout the country. Laura also served as the coordinator of volunteer and victim services of a rape crisis center that provided 24 hour hotline service.

“I couldn’t be more pleased to be back on the front line establishing a premier 2-1-1 service for the state of New Jersey,” Laura exclaims. She continues, “People in crisis, and even those who are just looking for answers, don’t need to have the added burden of finding their way through an often confusing network of social services. What they need is information, understanding and encouragement...and that is what they will get when they call 2-1-1.”

2-1-1 was launched statewide in the beginning of 2005. A companion Web site – www.nj211.org – was created in 2006. Visitors to the site will gain access to the statewide database, which now holds facts and contact information on over 13,000 programs, as well as resource pages that have been created to address select topics like Hurricane Preparedness, Avoiding Foreclosure, and Getting Flu Ready, to name a few. These focused resource pages provide a summary of information that is available on the select topic as well as important links to related state resources. “In essence, the 2-1-1 staff has done the research and compiled it, so all someone has to do is read the page to get educated on the subject and follow the links provided to access further information,” Laura explains.

If preferred, people can call 2-1-1 and speak with a call specialist who will provide assistance in searching the database or looking for answers to callers’ dilemmas. From the beginning, 2-1-1 was designed to answer

questions and address situations that were anything other than life threatening. When faced with a life threatening emergency, residents should call 9-1-1. For everything else, citizens are encouraged to contact 2-1-1 either by picking up the phone (land line, cell phone and many voice over Internet providers) and dialing 2-1-1 or by going to www.nj211.org.

The call centers, staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are equipped to address the needs of families in crisis, by identifying such necessities as local shelters or food pantries, and providing information on how to apply for food stamps or other government assistance programs. Everyday needs are also handled and call specialists frequently respond to inquiries regarding the availability of such things as local preschool programs or adult care centers. Additionally, the system provides critical information during times of emergencies, as it did earlier this month when 2-1-1 staff, along with the Office of Emergency Management's input, created resource pages on hurricane preparedness and flood recovery for its Web site in anticipation of the possible affects of Tropical Storm Hanna. When callers who wish to donate their time, efforts or resources call 2-1-1, they are connected to local agencies that will benefit from their generosity.

About 2-1-1

2-1-1 is a statewide information and assessment network designed to connect people in need with government, social services and community resources that provide assistance. This free, confidential service is supported by United Way in partnership with the State of New Jersey.