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**United Way of Northern
Nevada and the Sierra**

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AT&T Supports United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra as Part of New Initiative that Engages Families to Improve Graduation Rates in Washoe County

Reno, Nev. — AT&T* and United Way Worldwide (UWW) today announced that United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (UWNNS) has been awarded a UWW/AT&T *Family Engagement for High School Success* grant of \$50,000. This funding is part of a new initiative designed to help parents and caregivers get more involved in their child's education. AT&T has contributed \$2 million to the program through AT&T Aspire, a \$100 million initiative focused specifically on high school success and workforce readiness.

UWNNS has partnered with the Washoe County School District (WCSD), the Nevada State Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) at the Education Alliance and Ready for Life Washoe County to work collaboratively on implementing a plan to improve student achievement and increase graduation rates for at-risk students in the WCSD by empowering their families with the knowledge they need to support their children's academic achievement.

"By supporting innovative strategies that connect families with their children's education, we can ensure Washoe County's students achieve their best future," said Hal Lenox, AT&T Nevada President. "We look forward to working with United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra on this initiative."

Nationally, United Way has set ambitious national goals in education, income and health – 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 research-based best practices that will be used to outreach and engage parents include strengthening home-school relationships; enabling families to understand student data so that they can better track and monitor student attendance and grades; linking family engagement to

student learning; and building the capacity of schools and teachers to engage family involvement in the community.

“Creating lasting changes in education in our community is very important to United Way. This program allows us to address the low high school graduation rates by engaging parents.” said Karen Barsell, CEO and President of UWNNS.

United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra is one of 15 local United Ways receiving a matching grant through this 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.

“The Education Alliance and Nevada State PIRC are very excited to be one of the fifteen local partnerships to improve family engagement support to our local high schools,” said Denise Hedrick, Executive Director of the Education Alliance.

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 high school dropout crisis. One of the key findings of this research was that the majority of teachers (63%) and principals (51%) felt increasing their schools’ parental outreach programs would do a lot to reduce the number of high school dropouts.

“The Washoe County School District is committed to making the district accessible to all parents. We know parents are a child’s first teachers. We are pleased to be partners with United Way and the Education Alliance to assist parents with understanding how schools work so that they may fully support their children’s efforts to achieve academic excellence,” stated Dr. Heath Morrison, the Superintendent of Schools for Washoe County.

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

AT&T is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. As evidence of its commitment, AT&T launched Aspire, a \$100 million high school success and workforce readiness initiative in April 2008. 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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About United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra

United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra brings the community together to identify our most pressing needs, produce measurable results, and, thereby, improve lives. United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra is achieving meaningful impact here in our community. We use our expertise and knowledge through innovative funding of programs and initiatives that have a positive influence on the people of

northern Nevada and the Lake Tahoe communities. Our Mission is to link the community's will and resources to improve lives. Call 775-322-8668 or visit uwayreno.org.

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