United Way of Metro Chicago Announces $1 Million Gift from Rick and Cate Waddell

Generous donation from Waddell Family to be invested in United Way’s Austin Neighborhood Network

CHICAGO (PRWEB) September 17, 2019 -- United Way of Metro Chicago has received a $1 million charitable commitment from Rick and Cate Waddell to support economic development in the community of Austin through the Neighborhood Network Initiative. Led by the community coalition Austin Coming Together, United Way of Metro Chicago’s Austin Neighborhood Network is partnering with individuals and organizations across sectors to maximize impact in Chicago’s largest community area.

This generous donation from the Waddell Family will be invested over the course of five years, supporting key initiatives that will advance the goals outlined in Austin’s Quality of Life Plan. The gift will help to accelerate progress and increase opportunities for families in Austin, revitalizing the historic community area. This million-dollar gift from the Waddell Family will accelerate Austin’s current two-generation early learning and workforce development strategies, enable communications needed to reach a broad audience with news of the positive changes taking place in Austin, and aid in Austin Coming Together’s establishment of the Workforce Innovation Center in partnership with their member organization, Westside Health Authority. It will also help bring to life a plan to align and expand gardens and farms in Austin through Farm on Ogden, a project of the Chicago Botanic Garden and Lawndale Christian Health Center.

“We are incredibly grateful for committed partners like the Waddell family who support the work of our community partners in the neighborhoods we serve,” said Sean Garrett, President and CEO of United Way of Metro Chicago. “It is when we join forces at the neighborhood level that we see lasting change across the entire Chicago region. This gift will help expand the reach of programs designed to meet the needs of the entire family, creating thriving households and increased economic development in Austin.”

“Our family is excited to support the combined efforts of United Way and Austin Coming Together,” said Rick Waddell. “Through innovative collaboration with partners such as the Chicago Botanic Garden, we look forward to the transformation of this historic Chicago neighborhood.”

With almost 100,000 residents, Austin is the largest community area in the city, making its health vital to the region. Austin Coming Together has a strong track record of partnering with institutions to bring services into the community, such as facilitating collaboration between the City Colleges of Chicago and the Austin Childcare Providers Network to bring Associate Degree coursework for childcare providers into the neighborhood. The community is ready to effect change as a result of its building blocks – the Neighborhood Network Initiative, Thrive 2025, and the LISC Quality of Life Plan. Austin Coming Together is also preparing to start a pilot of NowPow, a comprehensive provider referral system, to more seamlessly move clients through the Neighborhood Network.

“This is another fine example of how United Way of Metro Chicago has increased ACT’s social capital to attract more resources to amplify and accelerate the progress of our community revitalization efforts in Austin,” said Darnell Shields, Executive Director of Austin Coming Together. “We appreciate and value United Way’s commitment to supporting our collective impact, and the Waddell Family for recognizing the opportunity their investment will afford us as we all continue to move Austin Forward Together!”
To learn more about United Way of Metro Chicago’s Austin Neighborhood Network, visit LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/austin.

About United Way of Metro Chicago
United Way of Metro Chicago fights for the health, education, financial stability and safety of every person in every neighborhood across the region. We advance the common good on both a regional and neighborhood level by focusing on the building blocks for thriving people and communities: access to quality health care, a good education, financial stability and ensuring people are safe. United Way’s Neighborhood Network Initiative supports and coordinates investment and programming in 10 city and suburban communities to address community challenges and improve the lives of residents. Join the fight at LIVEUNITEDchicago.org.

About Austin Coming Together
Austin Coming Together (ACT) is a member based 501(c)3 organization whose primary goal is to increase the collective impact of their member organizations in improving education and economic development outcomes for the Austin community. For more information visit, AustinComingTogether.org.

About Westside Health Authority
Westside Health Authority (WHA) is a community institution in the Austin neighborhood and has been serving the Westside since 1988. WHA’s wide breadth of services and initiatives include a youth development center and reentry center on W. Division. In addition to service delivery, WHA also manages community organizing and real-estate initiatives to contribute to the development and beautification of Austin. For more information visit, HealthAuthority.org.

About Chicago Botanic Garden
The Chicago Botanic Garden, one of the treasures of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, is a 385-acre living plant museum featuring 27 distinct gardens and four natural areas. With events, programs and activities for all ages, the Garden is open every day of the year. Admission is free; select event fees apply; parking fees apply. Located at 1000 Lake Cook Road in Glencoe, IL, the Garden is smoke free. Opened to the public in 1972, the Garden is managed by the Chicago Horticultural Society, accredited by the American Association of Museums and a member of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA). For more information, visit, chicagobotanic.org
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