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City, County, Social Service Agencies Develop New Panhandling Initiative

'REAL CHANGE DAYTON' CAMPAIGN CONNECTS THOSE IN NEED WITH SHELTER, FOOD, SERVICES

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DAYTON (Ohio), June 21, 2017 — Following the Supreme Court challenge of anti-panhandling ordinances adopted by Dayton and other cities across the country, there has been an increase in panhandling. But how does one know who is really in need and who is simply taking advantage of the loss in anti-panhandling regulations? The Dayton region certainly has a reputation for generosity of its residents, but what's the best way to connect people who want to help with those in need? How does the community protect the its most vulnerable residents and truly lift them out of poverty?

Real Change Dayton

In late 2016, the Downtown Dayton Partnership convened a coalition to address panhandling issues. Partner agencies include United Way, City of Dayton, Montgomery County Health and Human Services Department, and the Downtown Dayton Partnership, with support from Homefull, St. Vincent de Paul, Goodwill Easter Seals, and other local nonprofits. Each organization represented in the coalition contributes to the Dayton region's net of social services and specialized care options for at-risk populations. The result: an educational campaign called **Real Change Dayton** to raise awareness about Dayton's social service agencies and the sustainable, long-term benefits they can provide. The coalition decided the best way to help these individuals would be a communication strategy that would serve two purposes: educate the public that there's a better way to give if they truly want to help those in need, and to ensure panhandlers and anyone else in need receives emergency and long-term services.

"What people might not realize is you can give a dollar to someone standing with a sign at the intersection, but that same dollar can be stretched farther when it's donated to a local nonprofit or social service agency," said Tracy Sibbing, vice president of community impact at United Way of the Greater Dayton Area. "These organizations have built extensive networks and can leverage donations to maximize the number of people who can receive benefits. Real Change Dayton will help these nonprofits continue their great work and get people back on their feet. Our ultimate goal is to help those in need to change their futures for the better."

Real Change Dayton is a collaborative awareness program to address panhandling in the Dayton community and provides an alternative to giving spare change directly to individuals on the street. The Dayton community's generosity better serves those who are truly in need when directed to social services agencies that are better equipped and trained to handle those crises.

Make Real Change

The team generated several ways to increase awareness for social service agencies and help generate a little revenue to help serve Miami Valley individuals families in need. "We've made great strides in creating this collaborative effort to address panhandling issues in our community," said DDP President Sandra Gudorf. "We want to increase awareness of the crucial services our local nonprofits provide, and let people know there's a better way to give."

- **Log on; make change:** A new website, www.RealChangeDayton.com, will be the hub for information on different local agencies and the services they provide. There will be links for



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those organizations and information on supporting their services through donations as a volunteer or financial support.

- **Real Change Dayton meters:** Vibrantly wrapped retired parking meters will serve as collection sites for those who wish to make a monetary donation. Look for them in heavy pedestrian-traveled areas.
- **Text to give:** A new text-to-give method provides a way to make mobile donations that will support local agencies tasked with helping those in need. Funds collected at all Real Change Dayton meters and online donation sites will be directed to the United Way of the Greater Dayton Area and invested in program that focus on financial stability, positive health outcomes, and emergency services like homeless shelters.
- **Connect with a card:** Real Change Dayton will create small cards with important information to connect those in need to local social service agencies. Emergency information will be printed on one side, and the HelpLink will be on the other. HelpLink is United Way of Greater Dayton's free and confidential hotline that supplies information about social services to those in need. Call 2-1-1 (or 224-3000) to reach the HelpLink 24/7. The call assistant will determine which organization(s) can best help individuals in need and help that person with the next steps to obtaining assistance of any kind.
- **Lend time and talent:** Volunteer opportunities at each agency can be found via links from RealChangeDayton.org. Donations made directly to those organizations can impact underserved communities and those in need of services.
- **Tell a friend:** Real Change Dayton will work when we all work together to find a better way to give. Share information about Real Change Dayton in your social circles and let people know they can make their donation go further by contributing to the agencies that are best suited to help those in need.

Much Needed Change

Panhandling exists in cities of all sizes across the country. Real Change Dayton is focused on improving the well-being and stability for all people in this community. Assuring that all people have access to programs and services that meet their basic needs, then setting them on a path to self-sufficiency and positive health will ultimately benefits the whole community.

When approached by a panhandler, it's up to each individual to choose how to respond. It's OK to politely say "no" and walk or drive away. Real Change Dayton suggests following any of the steps listed above. Aggressive action and abusive language are never acceptable; if a panhandler becomes aggressive or if anyone feels threatened, they should contact police by calling (937) 333-COPS (2677).

Real Change Dayton is made possible with support from the City of Dayton and the Dayton Police Department; Montgomery County; United Way of the Greater Dayton Area; Goodwill/Easter Seals of the Miami Valley; Homefull, Miami Valley Housing Opportunities; Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug, Addiction and Mental Health Services; PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) Program Street Outreach; St. Vincent DePaul; the Foodbank; City of Dayton Department of Law; and the Downtown Dayton Partnership. Visit RealChangeDayton.org to learn more about these organizations.

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