



**Brown County United Way, United Way Fox Cities, United Way of Oshkosh**

February 7, 2008

## **NEWS RELEASE**

*Embargoed until February 11, 2008 news conference*

10:00 am United Way Fox Cities  
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### ***United Way 2-1-1, National Military Family Association and Freshman Congressional Spouse Class of 110<sup>th</sup> Congress collaborate to address Military Family, Soldier and Veteran Outreach***

Almost two out of every 10 US troops who have faced combat in Iraq may return with serious symptoms of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a study released by the New England Journal of Medicine.

In response to concerns for returning veterans the Freshman Congressional Spouses Class of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress decided to take on this issue as a national community project. Led by Freshman Class president Gayle Kagen, the effort marks the first time that the group has taken on a project on a nationwide scope.

Following a tour of Walter Reed Hospital representatives of the Congressional Class went back to their local VA medical centers and met with veterans and returning soldiers to identify the problems that they are facing. The following issues were identified:

- High incidents of: post traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, depression, suicide, homelessness, spousal and child abuse, unemployment, divorce and transportation problems.
- Military counseling was provided for the returning soldier, but not the family members.
- Less than 40% of the returning soldiers in need and afflicted by PTSD go for help.
- Veterans do not seek help for various reasons including a lack of trust in health professionals, worries of being seen as “weak,” fear of lack of confidentiality, and simply not knowing who to call or where to go for help.
- Many of the returning soldiers who do go for help must wait an average of 1 to 2 years for services.

The Congressional Class decided to focus on helping to meet the needs of military families, as they felt that was the most inclusive way to address the wide range of concerns for returning soldiers, veterans, and their families. Because of the severity of the problems our returning soldiers and their families face, the project is a bipartisan effort of the full class.

Gayle Kagen contacted United Way Fox Cities, to discuss how 2-1-1 could provide assistance to veterans and their families. “2-1-1” is a 3 digit, easy to remember telephone number that is answered by information and referral professionals in 2-1-1 centers across the US. United Ways operate 51% of the 240 2-1-1 call systems in the United States that are established for “linking people to services.” 2-1-1 offers access to resources such as counseling, shelter, food banks, health resources, child care, financial literacy and job training programs.

The local contact led to discussion on a national level with United Way of America's Director of 2-1-1, Linda Daily. "We congratulate Fox Cities United Way's 2-1-1 leadership for their special outreach on behalf of veterans and military families. Across the United States, more than 225 million people have access to 2-1-1, in 45 states and Puerto Rico. Dialing 2-1-1 provides an easy telephone connection to professionals who will guide inquirers to a vast array of community resources where they can receive or give help. Military families can be assured of confidentiality and connections to military specific services such as Military OneSource and a myriad of civilian services as well," Daily said.

The Congressional Spouse class is also working with the National Military Family Association (NMFA), which was founded by wives of service members in order to create a resource and support system for spouses and children of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

Through the initiative of the Congressional Spouse class, these organizations – which had previously been unaware of each other – are now working together, to provide information, referral, assistance and advocacy support for veterans and their families.

Congressman Steve Kagen lauded his wife's efforts saying, ""Gayle Kagen has done a tremendous job in bringing together the United Way and National Military Families Association. Now, because of this partnership, veterans and military across the U.S. will have an easy telephone number to remember to get connected with their military and veteran benefits: 2-1-1. Thank you to Gayle, United Way and NMFA for caring so much for our Vets. The 2-1-1 program proves that by working together, we will build a better nation for all of us."

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, (2/11) United Way of America and 2-1-1 are highlighting the special needs of our military and veterans and recognizing the important work of the collaboration by the Congressional Spouse Class, 2-1-1, and National Military Family Association.

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