

For Immediate Release

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United Way of Santa Barbara County Volunteer 'Matchmaking' Website Ready for National Volunteer Week, April 19-24

VolunteerSBC.org increases potential and impact for volunteerism throughout Santa Barbara County, celebrates local volunteers and kicks off Day of Caring 2009 planning

Santa Barbara, CA, April 20, 2009 – With the backdrop of upcoming National Volunteer Week this April 19th to 24th, United Way of Santa Barbara County is pleased to announce the continuing growth of its interactive, **countywide volunteer matching website**, www.VolunteerSBC.org. Since its start in 1923, one of United Way of Santa Barbara County's great successes is its track record of cultivating volunteerism in the community. In the year since the launch of VolunteerSBC.org, United Way has again significantly increased the reach and depth of access to volunteer opportunities and volunteer passions and skills. The website connects community members with volunteer opportunities at local nonprofit, school, faith-based, service and government organizations and programs. "Volunteer Santa Barbara County" is sponsored by First 5 of Santa Barbara County, Citrix Online, The Orfalea Fund, SBParent.com and United Way of Santa Barbara County.

The website is a one-stop resource for the community year-round, helps to promote initiatives such as National Volunteer Week, and special local initiatives such as holiday, teen and family volunteer opportunities - and United Way's Day of Caring, in which community organizations partner to support the largest single-day volunteering event in the Tri-Counties. **During this National Volunteer Week, themed "Celebrating People in Action", individuals and student, civic and corporate groups are encouraged to start planning to take part in United Way's 2009 Day of Caring, which will be held on September 19.**

"We are excited that this online resource is having such a positive impact on the organizations in our community that need it most," said Paul Didier, CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County. "The United Way has a long history of working with volunteers and we are finding that matching organizations and volunteers in this way gives individuals an easy way to find their personal path to making a difference."

VolunteerSBC.org functions similarly to web-based dating services. Organizations post their volunteer needs on a continual basis and community members can search for their interests based on a number of criteria including areas of interest, types of skills, time of day or year available and more. After the community member enters his or her criteria, the website then offers the best volunteer opportunity matches.

VolunteerSBC first year update

Vital current statistics and year one milestones for the website include:

- Total of 1350 volunteer placements since 2008 launch, up from just over 150 registrations one year ago.
- Matched and placed over 100 volunteers who signed up to assist with Tea Fire recovery efforts with nonprofit organizations including American Red Cross Santa Barbara County and Mountain Drive Association. Volunteers helped clear affected properties and did preventative sandbagging.
- More than 300% increase in number of volunteers registered through the site.

- Currently, VolunteerSBC.org averages over 1,900 unique visitors per month and more than 14,000 page hits per month.
- The site currently features over 250 volunteer opportunities from nearly 150 organizations of all kinds, including those serving children, families and, seniors such as People Helping People, Isla Vista Youth Projects, and Luis Oasis Senior Center.
- Volunteersbc.org was invited to join the state-wide California Volunteer Matching Network as a “California Hub”. These local volunteer connector organizations are the backbone of the statewide system. The California Volunteer Network will be placing 40 AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers at these hubs, including United Way, to further expand the countywide volunteer outreach.
- VolunteerSBC.org also partners with the Non-Profit Support Center to educate organizations and individuals on volunteerism and service. On April 28, the workshop will be “*The ABCs of Volunteer Management.*” Earlier this year, the workshop was titled “*How To Be A Better Volunteer.*”

In addition to the core volunteer-organization matching service, VolunteerSBC.org also features:

- The ability to nominate outstanding volunteers for recognition as a VolunteerSBC.org Volunteer of the Week. Nominations can be made online or via fax or mail using a printable form available at the website.
- “Board Connections” which lists Board of Directors opportunities and “Product Connections”, the online marketplace where organizations list needed items and users list items they wish to donate.
- A donation page allowing community members who wish to financially support programs and services that address specific issues like poverty, health, housing or domestic violence – or within a geographic area, like the South Coast or the Santa Ynez Valley.
- Through an agreement with Tixity.com, opportunities will also appear on 32 newspaper, television and radio station community calendars throughout Santa Barbara County.

In 2008 Maria Shriver recognized United Way of Santa Barbara County for the positive impact of its Volunteer programs on the community. The recognition was on behalf of the Office of the First Lady and Karen Baker, Secretary of Service and Volunteering.

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