

Get your local daily news, special offers & more delivered right to your inbox! SIGN UP NOW >

http://www.ncnewsonline.com/news/county-united-way-team-up-to-promote-grow-system/article_d095c87c-7141-11e6-b361-5f2885efdeb1.html

< PREVIOUS

Daily record for Sept. 3, 2016

> NEXT UP



Ridge says terrorism threats are changing - not going away
HARRISBURG - Get used to it.

FEATURED

County, United Way team up to promote, grow 211 system

By Dan Irwin
New Castle News 3 hrs ago



Contributed photo

Cardi Young, executive director of the United Way of Lawrence County, stands with a sign displaying information about the 211 system.

1



For most people, getting a tax bill is not a moment to celebrate.

Some, though, could be doing just that before 2017 runs its course.

After all, when 52,000 local residents get their February tax bills from the Lawrence County Treasurer's Office, they'll also be receiving some information that could change their lives.

A special section of the bill will contain information on the 211 system, a 24-hour, professionally staffed helpline for all human services.

Started in Lawrence County in 2013, the 211 system provides callers with help for not life-threatening issues relating to housing, utilities, food, and other social services. It can also provide resources for people who have recovery needs after a natural disaster. Funded by county commissioners and local donors, it is a part of the United Way's Southwest Region and is hosted by the United Way of Allegheny County.

As such, local United Way board members have been on the lookout for ways to get the word out about the system, which is accessed by calling 211 or chatting at pa211sw.org.

Board member Wayne Alexander happen to share that concern with count Treasurer Richard L. Rapone earlier this year. Rapone promised to give some thought to what his department might be able to do to help.

"As treasurer, I'm involved with people who cross my path on any given day," he said, "whether its with the tax outreach program (which visits various municipalities to facilitate tax payment) or at the counter, and people want to talk. They have a live person in front of them who works for the county, and they have concerns. They just want to know 'Can you refer ...', 'Can you help?'"

"We get a lot of calls for legal assistance, or help with other responsibilities they have. We try to do our best, but there was never really an avenue, and we always wished we could do more."

After talking with his solicitor, the county commissioners and the vendors who produce and print the tax statements, Rapone was able to propose the idea of putting the 211 info on a statement that ends up in the mailboxes of 52,000 county residents. The vendors, he added, are making the modifications at no charge to the county.

In addition, local United Way Executive Director provided the treasurer's office with informational cards and placards that employees there already have begun distribute to people who show up at their window.

"But not only do we want to make the taxpayers of Lawrence County aware and help them to be recipients of these programs, but we also want to help grow the program and the agencies," Rapone said. "If there's anybody out there who can offer their services, we want to grow these agencies, too."

Enter Janet Kalajainen.

THANKING VETERANS

Inspired by a list of veterans support services on the 211 website, Kalajainen, the county's register of wills and recorder of deeds came up with an idea of her own.

Working with Jesse Putnam, the county director of veterans affairs, Kalajainen's office plans a November launch for a program that will provide a free photo ID card to any county veteran whose discharge is filed there.

"If they don't have their discharge recorded, this is an opportunity to come up and do that," Kalajainen said. "Everything's free. My job is to work with all the vendors, every service agent in town — doctors, lawyers, restaurants, any kind of stores — to get them to give discounts to the veterans: 5, 10, 15, 20 percent, whatever it may be.

"It's a win-win situation for them because they'll be advertised on our website, and anything I put out will have the lot of the vendors on it. They'll also get a big poster to put in their window that they're a Thank A Vet participant."

Kalajainen is working with Young to sync her program with the 211 system, and plans to piggyback on Rapone's tax bills by inserting a flier of her own. He plan is to launch the program in time for Veterans Day.

She hopes to have two machines to create the ID cards, one for her office and one to take on the road to community events. A records improvement fund — a fee collected on the the recording of deeds — will be used to pay for the equipment and supplies needed to get things rolling.

WORKING TOGETHER

Meanwhile, the county commissioners continue to allot \$5,000 annually toward the 211 program, “And I think we’re one of the very few counties that do that,” Commissioner Chairman Dan Vogler said. “We recognize the overall benefit to the community to make a small investment in it.”

Young said that she is “ecstatic” to get such support from the county’s elected officials and employees.

“Our funding is very limited,” she said, “so to have our elected officials come on board and support this is exciting. I remember when we were doing training for the program in Allegheny County, there was an agency there requesting funds for housing, and they put Lawrence County down in their application.

“So people in our community would be eligible for that, but how would they know about it? But if someone were to call in to 211, they would learn about them. But we need to make people aware of that.”

The pairing of county government and the United Way is helping to do that, and District Attorney Joshua Lamancusa note the the effort is typical of what he sees county offices doing.

“You have private agencies working hand in hand with government agencies,” he said. “It’s everyone saying, ‘Look, we know there’s no one coming to help. This is just us. So let’s stand together and make our community as good as we can make it.”

0 comments

Sign in

5 people listening

		+ Follow	Share
		Post comment as...	

Newest | Oldest

Top Video Headlines

of 3



This Week's Circulares

STOCK UP
 RECEIVE A \$10 REBATE ON A SINGLE QUALIFYING PURCHASE OF \$40 OR MORE ON P&G PRODUCTS
 LAUNDRY DETERGENT YOUR CHOICE
 Gain® \$12.98
 Tide® Sale \$10
 HOVER FOR CIRCULAR
MENARDS

CVS pharmacy September 6-10, 2016
 MIX & MATCH
 50% OFF
 \$5 Extra Buckle Rewards
 HOVER FOR CIRCULAR
CVS

Castrol
 OIL CHANGE SPECIALS
 \$26.99
 SAVE \$2
 \$24.99
 \$2
 THE TITANIUM TRIAL
Advance Auto Parts

New Castle News Events

(<http://www.ncnewsonline.com/events>,

- THU 8** Taste of Washington
 Meadows Casino | Washington, PA
 (<http://www.ncnewsonline.com/events/OF-WASHINGTON/2698288/2016->
- TUE 6** Computer Classes
 New Castle Public ... | New Castle, PA
 (<http://www.ncnewsonline.com/events/CLASSES/2087963/2016-09-06T09>)
- THU 8** Spin-A-Thon
 New Castle YMCA | New Castle, PA
 (<http://www.ncnewsonline.com/events/09-08T08>)

Dan Irwin

Dan, editor, started with The News in 1978 and spent 10 years as a sports writer. He's been a general assignment reporter, copy editor, paginator and Lifestyle editor. He's a '78 Slippery Rock University graduate with a B.A. in English.

