



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 21, 2009

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**RESTRUCTURED 211 SLO HOTLINE SERVICE LIVES ON, ADDS NEW MISSION  
*United Way of San Luis Obispo County, with \$20,000 in matching funds from PG&E, along  
with Transitions-Mental Health Association to Continue and Expand Services***

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA – The nonprofit community reacted swiftly to the news that 211 Hotline in San Luis Obispo would close its doors December 31<sup>st</sup> and that its information, referral and crisis intervention services would cease to exist in San Luis Obispo County. As a result, United Way of San Luis Obispo County, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Transitions-Mental Health Association and the board of 211 SLO Hotline found a way to save this valuable service to the community.

“We’d like to thank the 211 SLO Hotline board and steering committee for their heroic, determined work. Their steady approach and vision ensured that 211 SLO Hotline continued services long enough to allow the organization to partner with United Way and Transitions,” said Rick London, Chief Executive Officer for United Way of San Luis Obispo County. “The board of United Way of SLO County, also tireless in this effort, approved \$20,000 of our emergency reserves – generously matched by \$20,000 from PG&E – to continue the 211 service. It’s truly been a community effort, and one for which we’d like to express our deepest gratitude.” These funds will sustain the 211 call service in San Luis Obispo County for another six months.

“211 provides an unmatched, vital service to our community,” said Mark Frauenheim, PG&E Superintendent. “Keeping these phone lines open will ensure our friends and neighbors, have trained professionals to listen and provide help during times of hardship or distress. In addition, 911 will continue focusing on those issues that require immediate response.”

**A Valuable Resource**

In fiscal year 2008-2009, over 26,000 calls were made to 211 SLO Hotline by people in need of vital health and social service resources. Of those calls, one-third were crisis and support related, and handled by trained volunteers that were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“For the past 40 years, Hotline has handled hundreds of thousands of calls, and 45,000 callers have dialed 211 since that number was activated two years ago,” said 211 SLO Hotline Board President, Tim Williams.

Designed to handle calls for information and help that are not immediate, life-threatening emergencies or urgent public safety incidents, “211 was activated to provide an alternative complement to 911 and

alleviate calls to county government and nonprofit agencies. It would also serve as a valuable resource in times of local disaster or a countywide emergency” said John Callahan, Fire Chief for the City of San Luis Obispo and 211 Steering Committee Member. Ongoing funding has been problematic as 211 call centers nationwide await the passage of H.R. 211, and S. 211, the Calling for 2-1-1 Act, which is working its way through Congress.

### **A New Plan**

United Way of SLO County will contract with Interface Children Family Services of Ventura County to continue providing 211 call support. Additionally, Transitions has agreed to hire the trained staff and manage volunteers of SLO Hotline to establish a 24-hour mental health and suicide prevention phone line.

“As first a volunteer and then a board member at 211 SLO Hotline, I can attest to the impact it has on our county and its citizens in need,” said Jill Bolster-White, Transitions-Mental Health Association Executive Director. “We are glad to continue the good work of this valuable organization through the 211 call line and now – with Mike Bosenberry’s help – through a new mental health and suicide prevention phone line.”

Mike Bosenberry, formerly the 211 SLO Hotline program coordinator, has joined Transitions as the program coordinator for its mental health phone line.

The new mental health phone number is 800-549-4499. Transitions will market the new service to San Luis Obispo County as part of a new media campaign beginning in January called SLOtheStigma. The campaign is designed to reduce the stigma of mental illness and guide people to mental health resources in the county. SLOtheStigma is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63), through San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services.

The 800 number will be staffed by trained volunteers and employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week, answering calls related to mental health and crisis calls.

### **ABOUT UNITED WAY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

United Way of San Luis Obispo County is an independent, nonprofit organization governed by a board of local volunteers. It is affiliated by membership with United Way Worldwide and strives to build a stronger, healthier, more compassionate community by investing in programs serving education, income and health. The United Way movement creates long lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of problems that prevent progress in these areas. LIVE UNITED is a call to action for everyone to become a part of the change. For more information about United Way, please visit: [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).

### **ABOUT TMHA**

Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) is a non-profit organization that helps children and adults live, work and grow in our community. TMHA operates 27 programs at over 35 locations that reach over 2,000 people and 1,500 families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The emphasis of TMHA's many services is to teach vital independent living skills, building a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. For 30 years, TMHA has been dedicated to providing housing, employment, case management and life-skills support to mentally ill adults, at-risk youth and homeless adults. For more information, contact [hbrown@t-mha.org](mailto:hbrown@t-mha.org) or visit [www.T-MHA.org](http://www.T-MHA.org).

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