

NEWS RELEASE

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Toll-Free Number Established For Offers Of Help For Newtown

A toll-free number has been established to make it easier for people to call with offers of help to the community of Newtown, Connecticut. The toll-free number – 855-364-6600– will be staffed by local Newtown volunteers and supported by the United Way of Connecticut state 2-1-1Infoline.

The toll-free number was established to assist local officials who were being flooded with phone calls and emails from people asking how they could help Newtown in its time of crisis.

A call center organized by the Newtown Volunteer Task Force, a local citizen's group led by Kevin and Robin Fitzgerald, will handle the toll-free calls from people offering assistance, as well as follow-up directly with those people who called local officials and organizations offering help in the first week of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary. "We have had so many people from around the country and the world offering to help our Newtown community, and their generosity is overwhelming and deeply appreciated," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "We hope this toll-free number and local call center will make it easier for people to contact our community and to direct them on the best way they can help."

People calling the toll-free line can talk to someone who will take information on their generous offers of time, gifts, services, skills and money. The volunteer task force will help connect those offers of assistance to those in Newtown, including local officials, who are working with appropriate organizations and the families of victims to ensure that the offers of assistance will have the maximum benefit for those in need. People also are encouraged to visit the town website, <http://www.newtown-ct.gov>, to view current information and guidance from the town on donations. Please visit <http://www.uwwesternct.org> to learn how United Way is helping.

People interested in volunteering at the call center or for local activities to support the Newtown community can call the toll-free number or send email to volunteer@newtownvolunteers.org. Information also can be found at <http://www.newtownvolunteers.org>.

Newtown officials recently asked that no more in-kind gifts be sent to the town. Instead, people are encouraged to donate to needy children and families in their own communities in honor of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. People also are encouraged to share information, photos and videos on what they are doing in their communities at the Newtown Volunteer Task Force Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Newtown-Volunteer-Task-Force/322113667902426?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Fitzgerald noted that the call for volunteers has received a tremendous response from people in Newtown and the surrounding area. People from all walks of life, from many, many organizations, and all political affiliations are signing up with the volunteer task force as another way to help the community. He noted that the support of town and school officials has been essential to the volunteer effort.

Fitzgerald thanked local Newtown businessman Peter D'Amico for providing office space for the local volunteer support and call center, and AT&T, Best Buy, CDW, Charter Communications, Verizon, and Quill.com for providing telecom and Wi-Fi infrastructure and equipment and office supplies. He also thanked the United Way of Connecticut state 2-1-1 Infoline, which is supporting the work of local volunteers by handling calls to the toll-free line on a 24-hour basis. He credited officials of the American Red Cross, the United Way of Western Connecticut, The Network Support Company, and the State Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security with providing critical guidance and expertise in helping to establish the toll-free number, and the local volunteer call center to support it in coordination with the 2-1-1 service.

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