



PRESS RELEASE
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Louisiana Artist George Rodrigue Donates “Blue Dog” Entangled in Red Tape Image to United Way to Promote 2-1-1 Nationwide

-- 2-1-1 Service Provides Community, Volunteer and Human Service Information and Referral --

Alexandria, VA -- In an effort to focus national attention on the need to develop and fund a consistent three-digit dialing system nationwide that provides community, volunteer and human service information and referral – particularly in light of significant natural disasters and devastating events such as last year’s Gulf Coast hurricanes – Louisiana Artist George Rodrigue created and donated an image of his well-known “Blue Dog” mired in red tape to be used to represent the need for 2-1-1. For more information on 211: www.211.org.

Being a native of Louisiana and suffering through last year’s devastating hurricane season, Rodrigue was concerned about the failure of systems and institutions to adequately respond to the hurricane destruction and was interested in contributing to the recovery and rebuilding efforts. George wanted to use his art to bring attention to the needs of people and communities whose lives had been severely disrupted. After learning about 2-1-1 and the critical role United Way plays in long-term rebuilding efforts, George donated art work – debuting in Denver – to benefit United Way of America and United Way of New Orleans. “Cutting Through the Red Tape” shows the Blue Dog entangled in red tape, a metaphor for how United Way 2-1-1 is used – to connect people who need help and want to help.

“We’re very grateful to Mr. Rodrigue for donating this image to help support and expand 2-1-1 nationwide,” stated Brian A. Gallagher, President and CEO, United Way of America. “In light of the communications failures around 9/11, Katrina, and other disasters, everyone in America should have access to such an easy and useful service. In addition to representing how 2-1-1 can help people navigate the maze of social and governmental services, this depiction also represents the current stalemate in Congress over passing legislation to provide federal funding to support and encourage the nationwide adoption of 2-1-1,” Gallagher said.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember three-digit dialing system (similar to 9-1-1 and 4-1-1) that makes a simple but critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. It is a cost-effective answer to help those in need navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs. 2-1-1 was created and launched by United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta in 1997 and in only six years since the FCC designation has grown to serve over 172 million Americans - over 57% of the US population covering all or part of 39 states plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico.

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About George Rodrigue

George Rodrigue was born and raised in New Iberia, Louisiana, the heart of Cajun country. For more than forty years, his work has remained rooted in the familiar milieu of home. After attending the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, where the graduate school's curriculum provided him a nuts-and-bolts foundation in drawing and painting, Rodrigue returned to Louisiana. His most famous image, the Blue Dog, was painted for a book of Cajun ghost stories www.georgerodrigue.com. To find out more about the George Rodrigue Art Campaign for Recovery, log on to www.bluedogrelief.com.

About United Way of America

United Way is a national network of more than 1,300 locally governed organizations that work to create lasting positive changes in communities and people's lives. Building on more than a century of service as the nation's preeminent community-based fundraiser, United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. United Way of America is the national organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement. While local United Ways tackle issues based on local needs, common focus areas include helping children and youth succeed, improving access to health care, promoting self-sufficiency, and strengthening families. For more information about United Way of America, please visit: www.unitedway.org.