

Mary Gygli
Assoc. Director, Communications
216.431.3284

American Red Cross Responds to United Way Funding Cuts

Cleveland, OH – June 18, 2008 – United Way of Greater Cleveland has dramatically reduced its funding to the American Red Cross of Greater Cleveland by 77 percent -- from \$1.9 million to an approximate total of \$435,000. While this decrease will be phased in over the next three years beginning in July, its impact is no less devastating.

“United Way’s unprecedented and extreme funding cut to the American Red Cross will jeopardize disaster response -- the safety net we provide to thousands in Greater Cleveland each year, many who daily live on the edge of economic disaster,” said Hugh McKay, chairman of the board, American Red Cross of Greater Cleveland. “It will affect preparedness planning, the recruitment and training of volunteers, as well as vital and unduplicated services to the military and their families.”

The funding cuts from United Way completely eliminate funding for job training for the economically disadvantaged through the Red Cross’ Nurse Assistant Training program, placing at risk thousands of elderly citizens who rely on well-trained Red Cross nurse assistants to provide them with care at a vulnerable time in their lives. The cuts threaten the strength -- if not the survival -- of all of the Red Cross’ other essential programs, such as CPR, AED, First Aid and Water Safety and Learn to Swim programs that teach citizens vital lifesaving skills. In short, this action by United Way puts the Red Cross mission and our community at risk.

“When we received the initial correspondence from United Way regarding changes in funding, we knew we would be receiving a reduction over current and past year totals,” said Mary-Alice Frank, CEO. “However, the actual funding allocation is dramatically less than what we had anticipated -- and more devastating than the prior proposed cuts which already threatened our essential programs.

“As we all are acutely aware, the Greater Cleveland community is in an economic crisis,” continued Frank. “As funding for the Red Cross decreases, the needs of families in our community continue to increase. If we question the timing and the scope of cuts to social service agencies across the community, it is only because we know first hand that families here have never needed the help more than they do today.”

“The Red Cross must be able to continue to carry on its mission on behalf of the many individuals who will experience disaster in their lives,” said McKay. “Who

will help us help them? What will become of Greater Clevelanders if a fire burns them out or a flood drowns their hopes and dreams? Will the Red Cross be able to provide the assistance that Clevelanders have come to expect and rely upon? Will our fellow citizens who have lost their home to a fire or flood be forced to rely entirely on already-stretched public assistance because no other safety net will exist? Furthermore, what will happen if Greater Cleveland experiences a large-scale disaster such as the flooding that our fellow Americans currently are experiencing in Iowa, a pandemic flu outbreak or even a terrorist attack of the proportion of 911?"

For the safety and well-being of our community, it is essential that the American Red Cross of Greater Cleveland fulfill its mission to the 1.7 million people it serves. The dramatic cuts in funding by the United Way, if not made up for by generous Clevelanders, will jeopardize the Red Cross' ability to carry out its mission. Gifts of all sizes – small, medium and large – are needed to help bridge the gap and make certain that this essential safety net that the American Red Cross of Greater provides remains strong. Donations may be made via the Red Cross web site at www.redcross-cleveland.org, or call (216) 431-3010, or send your donation to: American Red Cross of Greater Cleveland, 3747 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115.

The Greater Cleveland Red Cross helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies by providing shelter, food, clothing and mental health counseling to families affected by disasters in Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake Counties. All disaster relief is free and is made possible by generous donations from the American people.