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Grants to help groups share some services

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Staff and wire reports

Five groupings of nonprofit organizations have been awarded \$135,000 by United Way of Rhode Island to use for merging or consolidating operations or services.

The recipients are located throughout the state and focus on a broad array of areas such as domestic violence, affordable housing and human services for individuals, families, children and the homeless.

“These organizations have joined together to share services that are complementary or being duplicated, and to save money and free up staffs to expand and increase their work in our community,” said Anthony Maione, United Way president and chief executive officer, in a statement.

“We are pleased to give out these grants, which exceeded our \$100,000 budget, to such important organizations, which will be stronger and enhanced because of our commitment.”

- Seven are domestic-violence nonprofits — R.I. Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center, Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County, Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center, Sojourner House, Women’s Center of R.I. and Women’s Resource Center of Newport and Bristol Counties. This summer, those agencies will hold a series of meetings to discuss and create a strategic plan for the optimal way to deliver shared services.

- Four are affordable-housing and homeless-advocacy organizations — Housing Network of R.I., Housing Action Coalition, R.I. Coalition for the Homeless and Corporation for Supportive Housing. They received a grant to co-locate in office space to consolidate administrative functions and collaborate on promoting affordable and permanent housing. They already integrate communications, government relations, advocacy and community outreach and engagement.

- Two share a commitment to comprehensive social and advocacy services — Tri-Town Community Action Agency, Johnston, and South County Community Action Agency, Wakefield. Both are expected to merge into one entity in the next several months and have shared the same management team for about eight years.

- The Newport Family and Child Opportunity Zone (formerly Sullivan School Family Center), which offers social services to families and individuals, will become a program of East Bay Community Action Program. The grant money will support communications, board development, strategic planning and

evaluation.

- The Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation, working to make target neighborhoods safe and livable, will merge with Woodlawn Community Development Corporation, of Pawtucket, dedicated to youth development, adult education and community health. The new organization will support success in school, job skills development and affordable housing/reducing homelessness.

Additional funding comes from a collaborative sponsored by the Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island, which includes Amica, Blue Cross & Blue Shield Association, CVS/Caremark Charitable Trust, GTECH, Hasbro and O'Halloran Family Foundation.

United Way created the fund to support nonprofits looking to merge and/or consolidate operations to better serve clients. The fund was established after many agency executives and board members expressed interest in exploring efficiencies.

The United Way plans to make other grants. Any two or more 501c-3 human-service organizations in Rhode Island considering a merger or a consolidation of administrative functions may apply. Special consideration will be given to those whose mission aligns with United Way's three focus issues — supporting children's success in school; job skills development; and affordable housing and reducing homelessness.