



United Way of Allegheny County

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### United Way Hosts 'Be There' School Attendance Matters Conference as part of the GradNation Community Summit initiative

**WHO:** **United Way of Allegheny County's 'Be There' Campaign**, in partnership with **The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development** and 'Be There' partners, will convene over 250 educators, parents, and community leaders. **The Honorable Dwayne D. Woodruff**, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, will give opening remarks. **Dr. Heather Weiss**, founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project, will be the keynote speaker. The event is sponsored by **America's Promise Alliance** as part of the **GradNation** campaign with national support from AT&T and Southwest Airlines.

**WHAT:** Area leaders in business, education, policy and philanthropy will come together with youth and parents for the 'Be There' School Attendance Matters Conference, as part of the GradNation Community Summit initiative.

Participants will discuss how the community can work together to support youth and their families to improve school attendance and educational outcomes for children and youth across Allegheny County. The crucial role of parents will be addressed along with practices that impact attendance and methods for motivating student success.

Attendance is a key predictor of academic success. A student's academic performance begins to suffer when a child misses just two days per month, or 10 percent, of the school year. Increasing a student's attendance by 10 percent has the likelihood of raising the student's GPA by one point or more. The 'Be There' conference is one of 100 GradNation Community Summits that will provide an opportunity to review current efforts to improve educational outcomes.

The 'Be There' initiative is a collaboration among United Way and its partners A+ Schools, Allegheny Department of Human Services, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT), Pittsburgh Promise, Pittsburgh Public Schools and the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. It is designed to mobilize the community to support attendance in schools across Allegheny County. Since its launch in 2013, United Way's 'Be There' initiative has been supported by more than 600 volunteers and adopted by 21 school districts, engaging nearly 13,000 students.

**WHEN:** Friday, March 6, 2015  
8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

**WHERE:** William Pitt Union Building, University of Pittsburgh - 3959 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

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**About United Way of Allegheny County** – United Way of Allegheny County is a change agent and efficient community fundraiser that improves lives by addressing critical community needs. By convening diverse partners and investing in programs and people to advance solutions, United Way creates long-lasting change and helps children and youth succeed, strengthens and supports families by promoting financial stability, ensures the safety and well-being of vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities, and provides county-wide access to information and referral sources meeting basic needs.

**About the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development** – The Office of Child Development (OCD) is a university-community partnership dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and families. Through interdisciplinary collaborations across research, practice, and policy, the OCD strives to turn knowledge into action and respond creatively and collaboratively to challenges facing children in Pittsburgh and around the world. Most of OCD's projects involve four basic functions: analyze information from research and professional practice; innovate with service demonstrations and applied research; learn and improve through monitoring and evaluation; change practice and policy based on knowledge.

**America's Promise Alliance** - Founded in 1997 at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, America's Promise leads an alliance of organizations, communities and individuals dedicated to fulfilling the presidential declaration signed on that day calling upon the nation to keep five crucial promises to every young person in America: the presence of caring adults in their lives; safe surroundings to live, learn and grown; healthy starts and healthy childhoods; an effective education that builds marketable skills; and opportunities to serve others. As its signature effort, the GradNation campaign mobilizes Americans to increase the on-time high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and prepare young people for postsecondary enrollment and the 21st century workforce. For more information, visit [AmericasPromise.org](http://AmericasPromise.org).

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