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**United Way of
Southwestern Pennsylvania**

Women's Leadership Council celebrates 15 years of impact
Group announces growth and achievements at annual breakfast

Pittsburgh, Pa. (Sept. 7, 2016) – On Wednesday, Sept. 7, from 7:30 a.m. – 9 a.m., United Way of Southwestern PA's Allegheny County Women's Leadership Council celebrated 15 years of impact during its annual breakfast event at the Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown Hotel. Nearly 1,000 women gathered for a morning of inspiration, philanthropy and networking.

Heather Abbott, survivor of the Boston Marathon bombing and the event's keynote speaker, told her story of courage, resilience, and optimism throughout her recovery after losing her leg in the tragedy. Beneficiaries of United for Women, a WLC initiative, also shared their stories of rising up after experiencing an unexpected life-changing event.

"Heather's story is a lesson in never giving up," Mary Richter, shareholder, Schneider Downs, and WLC co-chair said. "She is a model of strength and resilience and a person our United for Women beneficiaries can really relate to. These women, including Heather, have experienced something unimaginable but had the courage and drive to get back on their feet and succeed."

The WLC of Allegheny County was formed 15 years ago with just 500 members and has since become one of the top chapters in the country. Today, the council has more than 2,060 members who helped raise over nine million dollars just last year, making up 26% of the 2015 United Way Campaign total. Over the last 15 years, the WLC has raised nearly \$60 million, with each year's campaign total larger than the last.

At the breakfast, the WLC announced a new program called *TOGETHER Leading (to get her leading)*. Through this, current members will be given the opportunity to sponsor a young woman 35 or younger by increasing their annual gift to United Way's Impact Fund or United for Women by \$500. This gift will give access to the young woman for all WLC activities in that campaign year, including invitations to networking events with the more than 2,000 WLC members, attendance at volunteer activities, participation in LINC activities, and more—all without an initial financial investment.

“This opportunity opens a new door for young women in our community searching for a rewarding, philanthropic opportunity, and we hope they’ll continue to grow with the WLC,” Kelly Gray, senior vice president, human resources, Fed Ex Ground, and WLC co-chair said. “But not only that, this program gives our current members the opportunity to inspire a young person, do more good work in the community and become a role model for a young woman. It’s truly an excellent opportunity for both parties.”

United for Women, an initiative to help newly struggling women going through a life-changing event (death of a spouse, divorce, job loss or illness) was a key milestone in the success of the WLC. Since June 2013, United for Women helped more than 3,600 women avoid a financial crisis, homelessness, find employment and more. In the past year alone, United for Women helped nearly 1,500 women—many of whom were veterans or mothers.

“With each year, more and more women have stepped up to help women in need in our community. It is inspiring to see the commitment of our members and the milestones we have reached together,” Gray said.

About United Way of Southwestern PA – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

About Women’s Leadership Council – The mission of United Way’s Women’s Leadership Council is to mobilize the caring power of women to advance the common good. The Council unites women and demonstrates their power to, individually and collectively, affect positive change as philanthropists, community champions, role models, mentors and leaders in the Pittsburgh region. One of the fastest growing in the nation, the Council has grown from 500 supporters to more than 2,000 members over the past 15 years, raising nearly \$60 million to help struggling children, youth, seniors and families in Allegheny County.

About United for Women – The United for Women initiative aims to help women who are in need due to an unexpected crisis. Programs funded through this initiative assist women who are financially struggling for the first time, or who have found themselves unable to regain financial stability. The initiative targets women who, through short-term and modest financial help and other supportive services, can overcome an event-induced barrier to financial stability.

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