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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First-ever United Way *Write Start Project* Launches in Support of Local Teachers and Students

Community-wide project kickoff coincides with national United Way Day of Action

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (June 20, 2017) – United Way’s first-ever [*Write Start Project*](#), kicking off on Wednesday, June 21, is a back-to-school initiative targeting those who make a difference in the lives of our children, the individuals who spend their days ensuring that our students succeed in the school ... teachers.

The community-wide project will fill the gap and cost of teachers’ supplies by providing much needed school supplies to teachers in three underserved San Antonio school districts: Southside ISD, East Central ISD, and eleven SAISD schools.

Donations of school supplies will be accepted from June 21 – July 21 during business hours at United Way offices at 700 S. Alamo St., San Antonio, Texas, 78205; and at Firstmark Credit Union locations.

“Firstmark is proud to partner with United Way in an effort to create awareness for this important school supply initiative,” said Wendy Bryant-Beswick, chief retail officer. “As an educators’ credit union, we understand firsthand how the lack of necessary school supplies can impact a teacher’s ability to do the basic fundamentals of teaching.”

The wish list of supplies includes: crayons (16 and 24 count), composition notebooks (wide rule), Clorox wipes, dry erase markers, glue sticks, hand sanitizer, highlighters, notebook paper (wide rule), #2 pencils, pens (blue, black, and red), Post-it Notes, Sharpies, spiral notebooks (wide rule), and Zip Lock bags. Project supporters may also text “WriteStart” to 71777 to donate.

Volunteers are needed for a Back to School Kit Assembly Party at the AT&T Center on July 29, 2017. Visit www.volunteersanantonio.org to learn about opportunities and register.

Over 99 percent of teachers dip into their own pocketbooks to provide supplies and instructional materials for their students, according to the most recent [survey](#) of the National School Supply and Equipment Association (NSSEA).

Across the United States, public school teachers during the 2012-2013 school year spent \$1.6 billion of their own money on school supplies and instructional materials, according to the National School Supply and Equipment Association. On average, teachers surveyed said they spent a total of \$268 on school supplies in the 2012-2013 school year, \$491 on instructional materials and an additional \$186 on other classroom supplies for an average total of \$945 on materials for their classrooms during the last school year.

In San Antonio, United Way focuses on improving early care and education for children, helping students succeed in school, and strengthening families. The **Write Start Project** is aligned with United Way's work to support ready children and successful students.

Parent engagement is an ongoing process that increases active participation, communication, and collaboration between parents, schools, and communities with the goal of educating the whole child to ensure students achievement and success. Parent engagement refers to all activities that parents do to help their children succeed. It includes everything from ensuring that kids are prepared to go to school every day, to attending parent meetings, conferences, and events, to volunteering their time and talents at their child's school. It is vital to the student's success.

The first parent rooms opened in San Antonio Independent School District in 2006. The parent room model was the driving force behind the United Way applying for and receiving the U.S. Department of Education Eastside Promise Neighborhood grant.

During the 2015-2016 school year, 780 parent volunteers logged over 10,000 hours in home visits, parent leadership development training, and campus support.

United Way's [ReadyKidSA](#) Coalition launched the Children's Agenda for Bexar County in April 2017, which was developed in collaboration with local early childhood education professionals, child development advocates, health professionals, community members, parents, and civic leaders. The aim of the agenda is to set forth a far-reaching framework to better support local families to grow *healthy, happy, and ready children*.

The **Write Start Project** kickoff coincides with [United Way Day of Action](#), when communities around the world come together to harness the volunteer spirit and improve the conditions in which they live.

Sponsors of the **Write Start Project** include: H-E-B, the San Antonio Stars, Firstmark Credit Union, the Eastside Promise Neighborhood, ReadyKidSA, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services and United Way.

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