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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joci Straus honored at Women United *Power of the Purse* Luncheon

Event celebrates the 20th anniversary of United Way's local women's philanthropy group

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – (May 23, 2019) – Joci Straus, founder of the United Way Women's Leadership Council (now Women United), was honored at United Way's 5th annual Women United *Power of the Purse* luncheon on Thursday, May 23, at Valero.

Joci Straus has a long-standing history serving San Antonio, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County and its women's philanthropy group Women United. A group of 500 local dignitaries, including nonprofit, corporate and civic leaders, honored Straus with the creation and presentation of the annual **Joci Straus Visionary Leader Award** for local women, like her, who are blazing the trail and ensuring that women have a voice in community philanthropy.

In addition, Straus' friends, family and fans paid tribute to her by making a special gift to the United Way Childcare Scholarship Fund. In celebration of 20 years, over \$20,000 in gifts were made in Straus' name to the 2019 Women United Scholarship Fund. Lead donors include the Mays Family and the Greehey Family Foundation.

"We are thrilled to honor Joci and her inspiring work in our community," said Laura Vaccaro, Women United chair and vice president of events and community relations for Valero. "She is a shining example of how women across America make a difference in our competitive business world while caring for others through commitment and philanthropy."

Joci Straus served on the United Way Board of Trustees for 30 years, from 1987 – 2017, and the organization's Executive Committee from 1996 – 2015. In 2004, she served as community-wide

campaign chair for San Antonio, raising over \$35 million to help others. She also served as Chairman of the Board from 2006 – 2007.

“Joci’s vision over 20 years ago resulted in nearly \$50 million of investments in United Way, including participation in the creation of parent rooms at SAISD, thousands of families receiving food boxes over the holidays, thousands of children receiving quality childcare, and in families making a better life for themselves and for futures generations,” said Vaccaro.

The Women United *Power of the Purse* event celebrates the combined philanthropy that is changing thousands of lives across Bexar County. In the last 20 years, Women United has invested over \$46.5 million to bring strength and independence to San Antonio women, children and families.

Last year alone, over 3,100 Women United members opened their purses, contributing a record-breaking \$4.3 million.

The Power of the Purse lunch event benefits Women United’s [Signature Cause Childcare Scholarships](#). Childcare is a major factor impeding many parents with children at home from completing a college degree or vocational training.

“In many homes across Bexar County, women’s empowerment remains a pipedream,” Vaccaro said. “Too many women, and men, are missing out on the opportunity to get an education and the tools they need to support themselves, their children, and their families.

There are currently 64 childcare scholars, receiving childcare assistance for 223 children, who are pursuing financial stability through higher education and/or full-time job training. Recipients are able to continue their education and feel confident that their children are receiving affordable, quality childcare.

“We are proud to share that 16 scholars graduated in 2018 and another eight of our childcare scholarship beneficiaries are on target to graduate this spring,” said Vaccaro.

In support of the childcare scholarships, over 90 donated purses were available for purchase by attendees as part of a silent auction, in addition to a purse raffle. All proceeds support the Women United Scholarship Fund.

Hosted by Valero, *Power of the Purse* sponsors include: Valero Energy Corp., NuStar Energy, USAA, CPS Energy, H-E-B, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, PwC, Silver Eagle Distributors, Security Service Federal Credit Union, SWBC, UT Health San Antonio, HOLT CAT, and Principal Auto.

About United Way:

United Way is the largest private investor in health and human services programs in San Antonio and Bexar County. United Way focuses on 1) preparing children for school and life, 2) helping students graduate and succeed, 3) supporting strong individuals and families, and 4) providing safety net services for those in immediate need. For more information, visit www.unitedwaysatx.org or call (210) 352-7000.

About the Women United:

[Women United](#) mobilizes women who strengthen our community by investing in and promoting programs that positively impact our community's children, families and future. Women United members include professionals, community volunteers, civic leaders and individuals who offer their time, energy and talent, serving as catalysts for positive change.