



Anacostia
Watershed
Society

www.anacostiaaws.org

NEWS

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Contact: Steven Reynolds
o. 301-699-6204
m. 240-644-4827

Anacostia Watershed Society Joins with 20 Other DC Area Charities to Create New Organization to Revitalize Employee Giving

Citing declining revenue, groups leave the United Way of the National Capital Area to establish Community1st – America's Charities of Greater Washington, D.C.

May 1, 2009 (Washington, DC) – Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS), House of Ruth, Whitman-Walker Clinic, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, WETA and sixteen other Washington area charities have created a new federation, **Community1st - America's Charities of Greater Washington, D.C.**, with a mission to increase charitable giving through workplace campaigns. The charities are dropping their membership in the United Way and partnering with America's Charities, which has helped many area employers run their workplace campaigns in the aftermath of the United Way scandal in 2002, raising over \$40 million in employee-giving locally.

"The Anacostia Watershed Society is looking forward to working with Community1st and this remarkable group of charities—many of them local like us—to help take a new approach to workplace charitable giving in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region," said AWS Director of Communications Steven Reynolds.

Founding members of Community1st include some of the area's best known charities (complete list below) that together provide well over \$167.5 million in services to area residents.

Since 2002, United Way of the National Capital Area [UWNCA] has changed its focus from promoting giving to individual charities to raising funds for its own community impact grant program, aggregating dollars and distributing money to charities that meet their criteria.

"Community1st will promote designated giving, because that's what employees want," said Don Sodo, President and CEO of America's Charities. "Campaign experience and research over many years show that employees prefer to designate their gift to the charities of their choice, rather than give it to another organization for re-granting. The core principle of workplace giving is to trust donors to make a personal giving decision without attempting to steer their gift to a specific charity. "

America's Charities will be the workplace giving arm for Community1st charities and the fiscal agent for employee giving campaigns. The organization was founded in 1980 and participates in workplace campaigns nationwide.

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The America's Charities model focuses on their *Big Five Best Practices*, including:

- Customized Campaigns...every employer has its own unique campaign
- Designated Giving...because that's how most employees want to give
- State-of-the-Art Technology...more information about participating charities and time and cost saving for employers
- Lower Cost...ranging from 0-6%, with charities receiving much more of every employee's gift
- Trust, Transparency and Customer Service....values that America's Charities has lived by since 1980

"America's Charities has distributed 98% of over \$40 million raised since 2002. This should rightfully raise questions about the preferred way to run campaigns," said Sodo. "Although our average campaign cost is 6%, area companies have covered most of this cost, allowing us to distribute an average of 98% of donor funds each year. Over that same period since 2002, United Way has typically retained 10-12% of every employee's gift...and sometime even 100%, without distributing it to their designated charity."

"The benefits that the America's Charities giving model affords individual donors, their employers, and charities is hard to ignore," said Reynolds, "we believe the degree of choice and transparency America's Charities offers, coupled with their dedication to promoting the work of individual charities, will result in increased giving to our organization even in today's difficult economic times."

The launch of Community1st-America's Charities of Greater Washington, DC was announced Wednesday just prior to America's Charities annual "Thank You" luncheon for area employers at the J. W. Marriott. Award recipients include ExxonMobil, AARP, The MITRE Corporation, and the CFC of the National Capital Area. The luncheon program was emceed by Kelly Gibson of Washington Gas.

The founding members of Community1st-America's Charities are: A Wider Circle, Anacostia Watershed Society, Black Student Fund, Capital Hospice, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, Inc., District of Columbia College Success Foundation, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transitional Services, Inc. (FACETS), Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Higher Achievement Program, Inc., House of Ruth, Lorton Community Action Center (LCAC), Make-A-Wish Foundation® of the Mid-Atlantic, Inc., Rebuilding Together Alexandria, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Washington, DC, Inc., The Shepherd's Table, Inc., Signature Theatre, Inc., The Wellness Community – Greater Washington, DC, WETA (Greater Washington Educational Telecommunications Association), Whitman-Walker Clinic, and Youth for Tomorrow – New Life

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The Anacostia Watershed Society is dedicated to cleaning the waters, recovering the shoreline, and honoring the heritage of the Anacostia River and its tributary creeks and streams in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.