

United Way of  
Central West Virginia



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA helped central WV resident residents save more than \$545,000 on prescriptions in 2011 through a partnership with FamilyWize**

### **41 percent of adults say it's a problem for their family to pay for prescription medications**

CHARLESTON, WV (Feb. 10, 2012) –Thousands of prescriptions go unfilled simply because they are too expensive to fill. But free FamilyWize prescription discount cards, provided by United Way of Central WV, address this problem. Last year, this partnership saved residents **\$545,596** by cutting the cost of medicines by an average of 35 percent.

“The cost of a prescription really shouldn't be a factor, but, more and more, we're finding that the high price of medicine means that people have to make a choice. They can either fill a prescription or put food on the table and keep a roof over their head,” said John Ballengee, Executive Director of United Way of Central WV. FamilyWize free prescription card saves an average of \$20 per prescription. Those savings oftentimes mean the difference between taking a medicine or skipping it.”

United Way of Central WV is part of a nationwide grassroots effort in conjunction with FamilyWize Community Service Partnership. The free cards are accepted at 95 percent of pharmacies nationwide, including all major chains. Using a card to save on prescriptions doesn't require enrollment or personal information, so they're ready to use the minute you receive one, according to Dan Barnes, co-chair of FamilyWize.

“This helps people who have no insurance the most, but it can also help people with insurance if it doesn't cover their medicine,” said Barnes. “It's easy, like using a coupon. Just take it to your local pharmacist, and they'll know exactly what to do to automatically apply all the savings available to you.”

An estimated 16 percent of Americans didn't fill at least one prescription in 2010, and another 13 percent reported taking expired drugs, skipping a dose (12 percent) or splitting pills without approval from their doctor or pharmacist (8 percent). The alarming statistics are from the 2010 Health Tracking Household Survey, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In most cases, cost was the reason cited.

FamilyWize was the first organization to offer prescription discount cards for free to everyone, locally and nationwide, struggling with the high cost of medicine. Since its founding in 2005, the organization has worked with almost 1,000 local United Ways across the country to help more than 3.4 million people save over \$300 million on their prescriptions.

To get your FamilyWize discount card, call 304-340-3500 or visit [www.FamilyWize.org](http://www.FamilyWize.org). Cards are also available at the United Way office located at One United Way Square, Charleston, WV.

A list of participating pharmacies and discounts on specific drugs is available on the FamilyWize website, [familywize.org](http://familywize.org).

**ABOUT UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA:** United Way is a volunteer-led, volunteer-driven organization representing Boone, Clay, Logan, Kanawha and Putnam counties. From the board of directors to fund-raising volunteers and the others who lend a hand each year, volunteer leaders ensure United Way continues to make an impact on the issues that matter most. United Way of Central West Virginia is dedicated to making sure children and youth achieve their potential through access to quality educational programs; promoting financial stability and independence; improving people's health. By encouraging all people in central West Virginia to give, advocate or volunteer, United Way wants to show the power of "living united". For more information, visit [www.unitedwaycww.org](http://www.unitedwaycww.org) or call 304.340.3500.

#### ABOUT THE FAMILYWIZE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

In the spring of 2005, Dan and Susan Barnes heard of families in the Lehigh Valley area who were having difficulty buying the medicine they needed because of the high cost of prescription drugs. They responded by distributing a free prescription discount drug card through family and health centers in the schools in Bethlehem. The family centers then involved the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley who asked 25 of its partner agencies to help distribute the cards to individuals and families in need throughout the area. Almost immediately, Dan and Susan received requests from other United Ways to provide this free assistance in other communities. As a result, they established the FamilyWize Community Service Partnership in the fall of 2005 inviting a group of local and national companies to join together to provide this free assistance through United Ways to people in need across the county. Currently 1,000 participating United Ways and America's Promise Alliance Partners in all 50 states coordinate the local distribution of the free FamilyWize prescription drug discount cards. In February of 2012, the total savings from the use of FamilyWize prescription drug discount cards passed \$300 million and a new goal was established to reach \$1 billion in savings by the end of 2015. For more information, visit [www.FamilyWize.org](http://www.FamilyWize.org).

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#### SIDE BAR CONTENT

##### Statistics

- 16 percent of Americans weren't able to fill a prescription in 2010 because of cost. That number is estimated at 21 percent for 2011, according to a study by USA Today/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health.
- Patients not taking medicine as prescribed cost the U.S. healthcare system roughly \$290 billion/year in extra treatment and related costs.
- Every dollar spent on medication decreases total health costs to patients, insurers and government health programs by about \$10.10 for people with high blood pressure, \$8.40 for congestive heart failure patients and \$6.70 for those with diabetes.
- There were more than 100 million Americans in 2011 that were uninsured for all or part of the year— about 35 percent of the population.
- FamilyWize is free, does not require enrollment or personal information and is available to anyone. Discounts vary depending on the drug, but the program can save up to 75 percent. Average savings are 35%.

##### How does it work?

The FamilyWize card is easy to get and easy to use. Everyone can get a card – no application is necessary, and you don't have to qualify for a card. To use it, just take it to almost any pharmacy, including all major chains and the pharmacist will automatically apply the discount.

The fact that FamilyWize helps over 2 million people a year gives FamilyWize the buying power to negotiate lower prices on medicine, similar to those large insurance companies receive from pharmacies.

##### NOTE TO EDITORS

FamilyWize images are available for download and publication at:

<http://vlahospr.spitfirephoto.com/albums.php?albumId=177527>