**Making Choices Activity**

# Intro Script

Greater Twin Cities United Way envisions a united community where all people realize their full potential. Through targeted investments in household stability, educational success, and economic opportunity, we will foster a region where every person in the Twin Cities can thrive, regardless of income, race or place. We fuel lasting change by uniting people for social good. The rising income and opportunity disparities hurt us all. United Way focuses on household stability (preventing hunger and homelessness); educational success (providing early childhood education and quality out-of-school time programs for children and youth pre-K to grade 12); and economic opportunity (providing job training for adults to ensure all families can thrive). Over 730,000 people in our community live in or near poverty. That is equivalent to one out of every four citizens in the 9 county Twin Cities metro region.

The purpose of this “Making Choices” game is to have you experience the difficult decisions hardworking people in, or on the edge of poverty face every day.

# Supplies:

* Copies of the “game sheet” for each person or group of people.
* One roll of “Smarties” for each person or group. (15 “Smarties” in each roll)

# Instructions (read to participants)

* You may work alone or in small groups.
* The “Smarties” are symbolic of your budget so don’t eat them until after the game is over!
* For the purpose of this game, each person or team is to pretend they are part of a family of four, two adults and two children, ages sixteen and four.
* One adult is working full-time and the other is working two part-time jobs. Both make minimum wage.
* The family has a limited budget and only 15 candies to spend.
* You must make some tough decisions.
* Each participant or group must study their choices in each row and invest their candies with one, two or three candies depending on what’s most important to them: one being the least desirable option and three being most desirable option.
* You must not skip any rows

# After a few minutes, when everyone has a chance to place their candies, let them know there has been a change:

Since it is summer both of your children are not in school, where they receive subsidized lunches, since you qualify for the program. The family doesn’t have enough money to purchase additional summer food. In order to get enough food to put on the table you must remove two candies. Now, take off two candies from your sheet and adjust the rest as needed.

***After they adjust their candies let them know there has been another unexpected event:*** Your spouse just got laid off with no severance pay. You must take off four more candies and adjust accordingly.

# Closing Script

Hardworking people make these kinds of decisions every day in Minnesota. United Way not only helps meet immediate needs such as hunger and homelessness, they also address the root causes of these problems. Specifically, United Way works to strengthen those in or on the edge of poverty: the one in four families in our community who are earning less than $52,400 per year for a family of four.

On average, the total monthly costs needed to sustain a family of four is far greater than

$52,400. The average monthly costs for a family of four in the Twin Cities region are:

* + Food: $1,019
  + Housing: $1,665
  + Health care: $560
  + Transportation: $771
  + Child care: $2,220
  + Other (clothing, school supplies, etc.): $752
  + Net taxes: $1,291

SOURCE: Minnesota Employment & Economic Development: Cost of Living in Minnesota<http://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/col/>

For a total annual cost of **$99,336 for a family of four**. That’s a $46,936 shortfall!

The amount of money that a family of four on the edge of poverty makes per year is clearly not sufficient to meet their needs.

That is why United Way envisions a region where all people thrive, regardless of income, race or place. Through greater access to education, jobs, and basic human services, we create opportunities for everyone to contribute to a stronger community.

Today, I offer you a call to action to invest in UNITE To Fuel Change by giving, advocating and or volunteering with United Way to keep this community a great place to live.