****

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:** Julie Rosenthal, JR Communications

 202-486-3059/julie@jrcommunications.com

**UNITED WAY NCA SUPPORTS AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCATES**

$50,000 Affordable Housing Initiative Grant Awarded to Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers

*Grant Will Fund Communications Action Network and Link Affordable Housing Service Providers throughout the Greater Washington Region*

**WASHINGTON, DC, July 26, 2012** – United Way of the National Capital Area (United Way NCA) has awarded $50,000 in designated affordable housing funds through an Affordable Housing Initiative grant to the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND). The grant enables the development of a Communications Action Network (CAN) that will advocate for affordable housing throughout United Way NCA’s eight regions.

“This important, region-wide grant will increase collaboration, inform our communities and civic leaders, plus create a united voice in support of the rapidly growing need for affordable housing,” said United Way NCA President and CEO Bill Hanbury. “The call to act now and act together is compelling.”

Over the next two decades, according to George Mason University’s Center for Regional Analysis, 731,457 new housing units will be needed to house the region’s growing workforce. Many of these new workers will have jobs that pay less than the area median income. In addition, in D.C. alone, more than 6,500 people are currently homeless, of which more than 1,600 are children. Some 39,000 households are on the waiting list for Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing. An additional 47,500 households spend 50 percent or more of their incomes on housing, leaving little for other basic needs.

“The challenges of providing housing that people can afford impact each local jurisdiction and thus our entire region,” observed Heather M. Raspberry, executive director of HAND. The regional nonprofit organization is dedicated to building a professional community of housing providers in order to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C.-Richmond corridor. “It’s important that we communicate these realities effectively so we can help policymakers and housing providers better meet the need,” she added.

With the grant funds, HAND and its partners, the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) and Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, will lead the development of a communications action network that will implement and coordinate a low-cost, high-impact affordable housing communications campaign developed by affordable housing leaders in the greater Washington region. The group will engage communications professionals from the region’s business and nonprofit communities and state and local governments, and will compile and communicate research and data, new developments and programs, and best practices.

“Housing employees is becoming a challenge to maintaining our economic competitiveness in Northern Virginia,” said Michelle Krocker, executive director of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, a regional coalition that promotes public policies and programs which address Northern Virginia’s unmet housing needs. “When an employer is based in Fairfax or Loudoun but its employees are commuting from Pennsylvania or West Virginia because they can’t find affordable housing near their job, we have a problem that we have to address, especially when you look at the economic growth projected for the region in the coming decades,” she added.

“Our region’s economic growth will be significantly limited if we can’t offer decent, safe and affordable housing for people at all income levels,” said Bob Pohlman, executive director of the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED). The Coalition consists of 135 organizations engaged in the production, preservation, financing and support of affordable housing and neighborhood based economic development in the District of Columbia.

“It’s critical that policymakers and the community at large understand the community benefits that affordable housing provides to the region,” said M. Craig Pascal, senior vice president and community development specialist for BB&T. Pascal brought the idea for the initiative to the executive directors of HAND and its two partners. “We are thrilled to have this generous support from the United Way for this important effort,” added Pascal.

**About United Way of the National Capital Area**

Focusing on the critical areas of education, financial stability and health, United Way of the National Capital Area and its nonprofit members not only provide immediate relief of social problems affecting the community, but also work to alleviate the underlying causes of these issues. Serving the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties for more than 35 years, United Way of the National Capital Area works to inspire acts of caring, deliver hope and improve lives. For more information about United Way of the National Capital Area, visit [www.unitedwaynca.org](http://www.unitedwaynca.org).

**About the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers**

For over 20 years, HAND has served as the only regional membership association dedicated to supporting the community development industry in its efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Through education, engagement and training, HAND builds the capacity of its diverse membership comprised of nonprofit and for-profit housing developers, resident service providers, lenders, government agencies, policy analysts and others, to support the development of sustainable communities for people and families at all income levels. Visit [www.HandHousing.org](http://www.handhousing.org/) to learn more about HAND’s efforts to build vibrant communities across the metropolitan region.

# # #