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## THE AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND UNITED WAY LAUNCH **COMMON GOOD FORECASTER™** TO SHOW HOW EDUCATION RATES HAVE RIPPLE EFFECT ON HUMAN WELL-BEING

### Web-Based Tool Demonstrates How Variables Would Change in a Community if Education Rates Were to Improve

Detroit, MI (May 13, 2009)—The American Human Development Project (AHDP) and United Way today announced the launch of their Common Good Forecaster™ ([www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster](http://www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster)), a Web-based tool that illustrates the ripple effect that education and graduation rates have on human well-being across a variety of indicators. The Common Good Forecaster corroborates that investment in education has the potential to dramatically improve human well-being in terms of life expectancy, civic involvement, obesity, crime rates, and multiple other factors.

Created by the American Human Development Project and United Way to show how things could change in a community if more people were to graduate from high school and college, the Common Good Forecaster enables the user to forecast a community's well-being based on the singular component of education. Starting with a community's current level of educational attainment, the tool shows life expectancy, children's reading proficiency, median personal earnings, and the rates of low birth weight, obesity, murder, unemployment, poverty, incarceration, and voting. When you change the level of educational attainment, you can see how these important economic, social, and political variables would change. For example:

- Today in Cook County, IL., **18 percent of adults did not graduate high school.** *If all adults had at least a high school diploma, there would be 66 fewer murders; nearly 140,000 more people would vote; and 57,500 fewer people would be living in poverty.*
- Today in Los Angeles County, **one in four adults did not graduate high school.** *If all of them had finished high school, then nearly 12,000 fewer people would be unemployed; and median personal earnings would increase by nearly \$2,000.*
- **If all adults in Mississippi were to move up one educational level** (for instance, high school dropouts graduated high school, high school graduates attended at least some college, etc), then: *nearly 33,000 fewer adults would be obese; the average life span would increase by nearly 2 years; and 10,600 fewer people would be in prison.*

"The Common Good Forecaster was created to show that investing in education pays enormous dividends in areas we all value: longer, healthier lives; greater economic security; more robust civic engagement; decreased crime; and brighter prospects for the next generation," said co-founder of the American Human Development Project Sarah Burd-Sharps.

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“The Common Good Forecaster is a great tool to help inspire communities across the country to see the real life connections between education and a quality life – healthier individuals, kids who are more fit, reduced crime and brighter futures for our young people,” said Brian Gallagher, president and CEO of United Way. “In one of the most challenging periods in our nation’s history, if we take decisive action to make sustainable progress in education a priority, we will advance the common good for all people.”

“It’s widely acknowledged that more education leads to better jobs and bigger paychecks,” Kristen Lewis, co-founder of AHDP, added. “Our purpose is to illustrate -- in very concrete terms -- the wide-ranging non-economic benefits of education, as well, benefits that range from greater voter turnout to lower obesity rates to fewer murders. And we do this by using the most recent official statistics available on American states and counties.”

To learn more about the Common Good Forecaster, please visit: [www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster](http://www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster). The Common Good Forecaster is a joint undertaking of The American Human Development Project and United Way. The American Human Development Project works to stimulate fact-based public debate about and political attention to issues that affect people’s well-being and access to opportunity. A hallmark of this work is the American Human Development Index, a measure that paints a portrait of Americans today and empowers communities with a tool to track progress in areas we all care about: health, education, and standard of living.

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**About THE AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:**

The American Human Development Project, an initiative of the nonpartisan Social Science Research Council, works to introduce to Americans a well-honed framework used around the world to assess human well-being: the human development approach. The project’s aim is to stimulate fact-based public debate about and political attention to issues that affect people’s well-being and access to opportunity. Its hallmark is the American Human Development Index, a composite measure that paints a portrait of how Americans are doing today and empowers communities with a tool to track progress and to hold elected officials accountable for improvement in health, education, and standard of living.

**About UNITED WAY:**

United Way is a global network in 47 countries and territories, including nearly 1,300 local organizations in the U.S. that advance the common good, creating opportunities for a better life for all by focusing on the three key building blocks of education, income and health. The United Way movement creates long lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of problems that prevent progress in these areas. LIVE UNITED is a call to action for everyone to become part of the change. For more information about United Way, please visit: [LIVEUNITED.org](http://LIVEUNITED.org).