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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



Left: Denton Kickoff Panel (R-L: Maduko, Wilson, Watts, Mitchell, Parker, Henderson ... Photo credit: Vickie Jackalone) and Lewisville Kickoff Panel (R-L: Henderson, Maduko, Rogers, Mitchell, Gilmore (with UWDC Board Chair Lyle Dresher)

Community Conversation Headlines United Way of Denton County Kickoff Series

Two breakfasts in Denton and Lewisville draw 500+ people to hear panel discuss needs in Denton County

LEWISVILLE, TX (September 14, 2018) – The second of two Kickoff Breakfasts and Community Conversations moderated by United Way of Denton County as part of LIVE UNITED Month was held today at Lewisville ISD Admin Center with panelists discussing community needs in areas of mental health, homelessness, children and families, and Veterans.

Gary Henderson, President & CEO of United Way of Denton County, led both “State of the County” conversations highlighting UWDC’s strategic focus areas as identified by key findings in the most recent [Community Needs Assessment](#). Both events were sponsored by Cima Solutions Group, Medical City Denton, and Independent Bank.

Joining Henderson today for the panel in Lewisville were Denton County Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell, Lewisville Councilman TJ Gilmore, Lewisville ISD Superintendent Dr. Kevin Rogers, and NCTC Vice Chancellor Dr. John Maduko. Mitchell and Maduko reprised their roles on the panel from last week’s event held at the UNT Gateway Center on September 7 which also featured Texas State Representative, District 63, Tan Parker, Denton Mayor Chris Watts, and Denton ISD Superintendent Dr. Jamie Wilson.

The panelist at both events discussed the collaborations happening between government, education, United Way of Denton County, and other nonprofits in filling gaps of service in the county.

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In Denton Representative Parker spoke at length about working at the state level to increase funding for mental health services. Parker said he's most excited about changing the stigma of mental health. Gilmore spoke to the Lewisville audience about police as mental health crisis first responders which directs people to justice system. "It's not best place for healing," said Gilmore.

Mayor Watts heralded the efforts to get groups together to do more with less. "This is the most collaborative effort I've ever seen," Watts said referencing the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team.

"Open your eyes," urged Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell to the Lewisville audience after discussing mental health service gaps and teens who are homeless. "We live in a prosperous county. But we still have people hurting."

Both superintendents shared alarming statistics about homeless students in their districts with Dr. Wilson revealing 30+ Denton ISD students forced to move over 12 times last year, and Dr. Rogers disclosing Lewisville ISD knows 500+ kids who are homeless right now.

"It's hard to talk to kids about homework when they are hungry, or don't have a home," lamented Rogers.

Dr. Maduko spoke about NCTC's work with United Way of Denton County in providing bundled, integrative services to move people from instability to self-sufficiency. Maduko reminded the Lewisville crowd that "education is the greatest means of upward mobility. Period."

When Henderson shifted the conversation to Veterans and their families he and Mitchell discussed the Veteran Community Navigator program, a highly successful pilot program incubated by UWDC to serve Veterans and their families now being shifted to reside in the Denton County budget with two full-time positions.

"Veterans served us," Mitchell told the Denton audience. "We have to make sure we are taking care of them."

Attendees at both breakfasts departed with what Henderson described as a "swag bag of knowledge" and encouragement to join the conversation. Included in the bag was a link – www.unitedwaydenton.org/kickoff -- containing additional information about the needs in Denton County and the collaborative solutions at work to solve those needs.

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