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HEADER: United Way NELA launches The Heirship Project to assist with clearing heir property titles

MONROE, La– United Way of Northeast Louisiana recently launched “The Heirship Project,” a pilot project in Ouachita Parish aimed at educating and assisting residents who need help obtaining a clear property title.

Heir property comes about when necessary legal work isn’t done after a property owner dies. Heirs who have a verbal agreement to live on the property, but no legal title could face many obstacles, including selling the property, making repairs on the property, or qualifying for government aid to fix damages to the home.

“After last year’s tornado, it became apparent to us that many of our residents are living in homes passed down from a family member. As a result, many of these residents do not have clear titles to their homes and properties,” said Michelle Saucer, Director of Community Initiatives at United Way NELA. “This gap in services needs to be addressed before another natural disaster or event affects these individuals.”

The Heirship Project will involve two workshops, one on Thursday, March 18th and another on Thursday, April 1st, both from 6:00-7:30pm. Interested individuals who reside in Ouachita Parish and need assistance obtaining a clear property title for heir property should contact 211 for registration details. Simply dial 211 from any landline or mobile phone (available 24/7), or text your zip code to 898-211 (available Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm).

“Our goal is to assist those residents who really need help clearing these property titles, but it’s also to educate the public,” said Kim Lowery, Director of Community & Organizational Strategy at United Way NELA. “We want to equip other local organizations so they can provide direction to their own clients.”

Wesley Eby Johnson with E & P Consulting, LLC and Escamilla & Poneck, LLP will provide education at both workshops. She says that families will have the opportunity to learn about various options, such as transferring property ownership to one or more individuals, selling the property to a third party, or continuing to have multiple heirs as owners of the property.

“Participants will be taught how to talk about these options with one another and how to be better stewards of the legacy properties left by their parents and grandparents,” said Johnson. “The end result of the Project should be that more property transfers will take place from the estates of the deceased to the heirs, leaving less properties becoming abandoned or blighted due to maintenance and repair needs not being met.”

For more information about The Heirship Project, dial 211 or text your zip code to 898-211.

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United Way of Northeast Louisiana works with volunteers, donors, and other organizations locally to create lasting community change in the areas of Education, Income, and Health, as well as Basic and Emergency Needs—the building blocks for a good quality of life. For more information about United Way of Northeast Louisiana, visit unitedwaynela.org, dial 211 on any landline or mobile phone, a free call 24/7, or text your zip code to 898-211.