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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF WITH \$161,308.72

Bemidji, MN: The United Way's "1986 Entertainment" Chili Cook-off held on Wednesday, September 21 at the Paul Bunyan Mall kicked off the United Way's 25th annual campaign for the community. Thirty-two cooks lined the halls of the Paul Bunyan Mall preparing chili to appeal to just about any taste from spicy to mild. 499 people attended the event which raised \$3,032.79 for this year's campaign.

During the program, Kristi Booth, United Way campaign vice-chair, announced the total raised to date by United Way pillar members and the nine pacesetter businesses. Pillar members are recognized for giving \$500 or more annually to support United Way. Pacesetter businesses set the pace for United Way's campaign by conducting their workplace campaigns early. Together, pillar members and pacesetter businesses raised a total of \$161,308.72 for United Way. The total is 38% of the United Way's overall campaign goal of \$420,000.

The 2011 Pacesetter businesses are Beltrami Electric Cooperative, First National Bank Bemidji, JCPenney, North Country Business Products, Sanford Bemidji Medical Center and Sanford Bemidji Clinic, Potlatch, RiverWood Bank, Target and United Parcel Service.

The Chili Cook-off's five celebrity judges: Sue Kringen, RiverWood Bank; Tiffany Paine, Security Bank USA; Karen Jacobson, MedSave Pharmacy; Sue Doeden, Lakeland Public T.V.; and, Pat Kelly, a community volunteer, judged the thirty-two chili recipes based on the aroma, taste, texture, appearance and creativity.

Awards to chili cooks were given in various categories:

1st Place Celebrity Division Chili: **Paul Bunyan Broadcasting**

1st Place Business Division Chili: **Real Living First Realty**

1st Place Restaurant Division Chili: **South Shore Conference Center**

1st Place Corporate Division Chili: **Seven Clans Casino**

1st Place Non-Profit Division Chili: **Sanford Bemidji Home Care and Hospice**

Most Creative Chili Cook Award: **Kraus Anderson – Top Gun theme**

Best Presentation Award: **North Star REM**

Best Name Award: **Cardinal Minnesota – “Fire in the Hole”**

Taster’s Choice: **Minnesota Chippewa Tribe with \$206.00 in votes**

Best Overall Chili Award: **Havenwood Care Center/Eldercare**

The United Way campaign for the community will run through October 31, 2011. Funds raised support United Way community impact initiatives and year round programs that address new and emerging needs. In addition, the funds are invested in Bemidji area non-profit agencies and programs that address the root-causes of the most serious human needs in our community and create real, lasting change in people’s lives, in the areas of: Education – helping children, youth and adults achieve their full potential; Income – promoting financial stability increasing self-sufficiency; and, Health – improving people’s health and social well-being, and providing basic needs/crisis emergency services.

For more information about the United Way, the campaign or to make a donation please call 218-444-8929 or visit the United Way’s website www.liveunitedbemidji.org.

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