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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Extended to July 31: Mount Vernon
“Neighbors Helping Neighbors” Food Drive for UCM**



Photo as 300 dpi attached to email for media distribution. Photo File name: 07-01-16_UCM_Neighbors_photo.jpg

PHOTO CAPTION:

Pictured at UCM making a delivery of a car load of food donated from the annual Mount Vernon “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” Food Drive is West Potomac High School rising senior Will Shute, drive coordinator.

The annual "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" Food Drive in Mount Vernon neighborhoods is a community-led food drive organized this year by West Potomac High School rising senior Will Shute, through St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Neighborhoods covered included Belle Haven all the way down to Mount Vernon. The drive end date has been extended from June 30 to July 31.

"I am grateful for the tremendous outpouring of support from the many volunteers who have joined in to be street coordinators and from everyone donating and helping to support families in need," says Shute. "We decided to extend the collection period to the end of July, to give all streets and neighborhoods the opportunity to participate. Our totals as of the end of June far exceed last year's support: we have already delivered to UCM more than 3,500 pounds of food. Plus we have collected more than \$1,660 in financial donations, which UCM can stretch even further thanks to their discounts with partner agencies, for example to purchase eggs at a really low price point."

Every week day, an average 80 to 100 working poor families receive supplemental groceries at UCM's Cynthia Hull Food Pantry, in addition to emergency assistance, counseling, and referrals to community resources. "The primary objective for our drive is to get food for children, so they aren't hungry over the

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summer,” Shute adds. “Many students in our area depend on the free school lunch program for their sole meal of the day. In summer, these children cannot count on that lunch -- and they often go hungry. I heard about this problem, so I decided that as neighbors to these children, we should try to help stock the food pantry with kid-friendly food for the summer. Parents of these children come to UCM for food for their family, which saves their limited budgets for other necessary expenses.”

“We are very grateful to Will and to all our donors for their ongoing efforts to alleviate hunger here in our neighborhoods,” says Richard Dobber, UCM Director of Social Services. “We especially welcome donations of canned tuna, rice, whole wheat pasta, low-sugar cereals, and other heart-healthy food items, including low-salt canned goods like vegetables and sauces, nuts, juice boxes, and energy bars.”

There is still time to donate or volunteer (including teens for community service hours) to support the Mount Vernon drive by contacting Shute at mtvernonfooddrive@gmail.com. Financial donations to support the “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” drive can be accepted as a check or via credit card online. Checks should be made payable to UCM (include “Neighbors Food Drive” in the memo line) and given to a drive volunteer or to Shute; or mail to 7511 Fordson Rd., Alexandria VA. To donate by credit card at www.ucmagency.org, click on “Donate Now” and type “Neighbors Food Drive” in the comments field, so your gift will count for this drive.

UCM has many opportunities for individuals and groups of all ages to get involved to volunteer to help neighbors in need, across all program areas and for all talents and schedules. For a list of current priority needs and to register for a Volunteer Orientation session, visit www.ucmagency.org and click “Support Us.” For questions or ideas for volunteer projects, contact Emily Griffin, UCM Volunteer Coordinator, at emily.griffin@ucmagency.org or 571.255.8973.

United Community Ministries (UCM) mobilizes the power of community to equip, educate, and empower people to measurably improve their lives. For more than 46 years, UCM has provided a vital connection between people in need and the people committed to helping them thrive. Services include:

- **Immediate Help.** For families and individuals in crisis, UCM provides counseling, food, financial aid, and referrals to other resources.
- **Children’s Programs.** UCM provides the next generation with essential education and enriching experiences, including full-day early care and learning, new parent education, and after-school programs for youth leadership development and computer access.
- **Adult Education.** UCM helps immigrant adults integrate into the community and contribute to and share in its economic growth through financial literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL) and citizenship classes.

In Fiscal Year 2015, thanks to generous community support, UCM provided life-changing assistance to 10,200 individuals in 4,000 families in the Alexandria portion of Fairfax County. This included 5,000 children – more than any other private nonprofit agency in the Huntington-Mount Vernon area.

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