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For Immediate Release

Spring Into Action for Healthy Eating

Bloomington, IN – April 12, 2013 - Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM), a nonprofit organization that provides affordable childcare to working families and basic needs assistance to families experiencing a financial crisis, is making strides in healthy eating. MCUM participates in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), better known as the free and reduced lunch program. CACFP recently introduced new standards for participating organizations and schools in order to promote healthy lifestyles for both students and teachers. There are three levels of the standards program: bronze, silver, and gold. These standards are voluntary, but MCUM decided to pursue the gold standard for the benefit of its enrolled preschoolers who receive 75% of their daily nutrition from the center. To secure gold status, an organization must have: a written wellness plan including nutrition guidelines for the facility; a written policy on providing breastfeeding support; a written policy on providing physical activity; a written policy on providing nutrition education; and opportunities for parents to learn about nutrition and/or wellness. MCUM has devised all of the necessary policies and is making changes to the nutritional guidelines for its meal program.

While more than 80 low-income preschoolers already receive well-balanced meals, MCUM's new nutritional guidelines call for increasing the amount of *fresh* fruits and vegetables and whole grains served in the center's meal program. Our enhanced focus on putting the best elements into our enrolled preschoolers' bodies results from our recognition that healthful diets rich in fruits and vegetables are key to cognitive development and have positive impacts on weight, motor skills, and academic performance. One of the goals of MCUM's childcare program is to prepare vulnerable children for the formal school system, so this project aligns directly with that goal. There are increased costs associated with the inclusion of more fresh foods, however, and MCUM needs support in improving its nutrition standards.

On Sunday, April 21, MCUM will host its ninth annual "Spring Into Action!" Luncheon and Auction at the Bloomington and Monroe County Convention Center. The theme of the event is fresh produce—even the desserts will be vegetable-driven—to help raise awareness for our healthy eating initiatives. Starting at 11:30 a.m., guests will have the opportunity to bid on a

diverse selection of items in both live and silent auctions, ranging from vacations in Orlando and Williamsburg to nutrition consults, a barbershop quartet serenade, and lunch with the H-T's own Bob Zaltsberg! A former childcare parent will speak on the impact of MCUM's programs and a delicious lunch buffet will be served. All proceeds, including ticket sales, donations, and auction item sales, will directly benefit MCUM's affordable, high-quality childcare program and emergency services program. Your attendance will help propel MCUM to the gold standard of school lunches and, more importantly, support the academic and social development of some of our smallest citizens. Tickets are \$25 for adults, and \$175 for a table of eight, available online at mcum.org or by calling Alison at (812) 339-3429 x16.