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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **United Ways of Northeast TN Kick Off Regional Week of Caring**

The 25th Annual Week of Caring kicked off on June 19<sup>th</sup> with a breakfast hosted by the week's sponsor, Bank of Tennessee, and held at the Bank of Tennessee Operations Center. Attendees included Bank of Tennessee staff; staff, board chairs, campaign chairs, and volunteers from the United Ways of Bristol TN/VA, Carter County/Elizabethton, Greater Kingsport, Greeneville, and Washington County, TN; nonprofit member agency directors and staff; and other community leaders. This year's host of the Regional Week of Caring is the United Way of Greater Kingsport.

Week of Caring is an annual event during which volunteers across the region from local businesses and organizations demonstrate their care for our communities by partnering with nonprofits to complete projects during the week that improve facilities and/or provide direct services to clients. This year, over 200 such projects will occur, with 30 in Bristol, 6 in Carter County/Elizabethton, 151 in Greater Kingsport, and 14 in Washington County, TN. Participation in the Week of Caring builds company pride, understanding of community needs, and a renewed willingness to financially support local United Way campaigns. The Week of Caring has been a tradition since 1992.

The keynote speaker for the kick-off was Dr. Brenda White Wright. Dr White Wright is a motivational speaker, storyteller and trainer. For over twenty years, she served as President and CEO of Girls Incorporated, a United Way agency that provides programs for at-risk youth. In that capacity, she was

named by The Business Journal as one of the region's "Twenty-Five Powerful Female Executives." In her talk, she spoke about how the Week of Caring is an example of what it means to "Live United." "Your efforts in the days ahead will demonstrate what living united is all about. 'Live United' is a movement, one that recognizes individuals coming together to create real and lasting change." After leading the group in a dance and storytelling exercise meant to exemplify the power of coming together, she said, "We do not all look the same. We do not all live the same. But we are one, because we are family. That is what living united means. (...) Let us go United into this Week of Caring."

Following Dr. White Wright, Craig Denison, Market President and Executive Vice President of Bank of Tennessee, spoke about four pacesetter Week of Caring projects completed by Bank of Tennessee employees. These projects, spread across four communities, included painting at the Coalition for Kids, spring cleaning at the Bristol YWCA, working with guests at the Adult Day Services, and preparing 250 bag lunches at Meals on Wheels. "Giving back to the communities that we work and live in is part of the culture at Bank of Tennessee and in the hearts of our employees," said Denison. "United Way is a leader in supporting many of our nonprofit agencies and their programs. They are also an integral part of bringing together community assets so that we can maximize outcomes. We are happy to partner together with the various United Way offices to sponsor the Week of Caring. It is a great kick off for our upcoming campaigns that begin in the Fall."

Participating United Ways then shared about their upcoming projects, with UW of Bristol Campaign Chair, Carolyn Ferrell; UW of Carter County/Elizabethton Board Chair, Andrew McKeenan; UW of Washington County, TN Executive Director, Jerome Julian; and UW of Greater Kingsport Community Impact, Director Becca Sutphen all highlighting volunteer efforts on behalf of their respective United Ways.

Brett Sago, United Way of Greater Kingsport Board President, then recognized a longtime Week of Caring Volunteer, Ken Walker. Mr. Walker has served in a leadership role for Eastman's Week of Caring for 25 years. Sago spoke about Walker's years of service and how he exemplifies the role of "servant leader."

Dale Fair, President and COO of Bank of Tennessee, closed the event, thanking all present for attending and sharing, "Bank of Tennessee is honored to sponsor the Week of Caring for United Way. This is an

important time for all the agencies to showcase the important work that they do in each community and for the volunteers to go above and beyond their normal generous contributions of time and treasure. As a banker, the greatest thing to me about United Way is the power of leverage. I can give \$100 and do good, or I can give \$100 to the United Way and it becomes \$1000 through volunteerism and inspiring others to give. We are proud to be a part of this.”

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