



The Women's Conference®

The Nation's Premier Forum for Women

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California First Lady Maria Shriver and The Women's Conference Expecting to Serve Thousands of Families in Need at 'WE Connect Weekend Fresno'

*Three-Day Community Resources Fair to Provide Vital Programs and Free Support Services
Such As Tax Preparation, Housing and Home Foreclosure Assistance, Job Assistance, Flu Shots,
Healthy Food Distribution and More*

March 19, 2010 – Beginning this afternoon, California First Lady Maria Shriver and The Women's Conference organization will be hosting 'WE Connect Weekend Fresno' – a three-day community resources fair being held at the Fresno Fairgrounds that is expected to connect thousands of families in need with money-saving programs and support services.

Event organizers are working with corporate partners, dozens of community-based organizations and government agencies, and more than 600 volunteers to provide a range of free services to Fresno residents such as: tax preparation from certified tax consultants, home foreclosure assistance, homeownership assistance, job and resume assistance, flu shots, healthy food distribution and much more. WE Connect Weekend Fresno will run on Friday, March 19 from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; on Saturday, March 20 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and on Sunday, March 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. First Lady Maria Shriver is expected to attend the event on Sunday at 12:30 p.m. and will be available to address all media at the conclusion of her visit.

Fresno County's unemployment rate has reached 18.2%, exceeding the 12.5% statewide average. That, combined with the 21.2% poverty rate in Fresno County, makes it urgently important that individuals and families be aware of the resources available help them.

“The need for these support services is great – and only growing,” said Maria Shriver. “As families have been impacted by this faltering economy, many have become eligible for programs they never thought they would need. We have found that many Californians don't know what resources are available to them and what services they may be eligible for.”

The WE Connect Weekend events are designed to help families take full advantage of valuable existing resources available to them – such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) – by bringing together local, state and federal public and private partners all in one place. Through EITC, for instance, low-income working families can qualify for up to \$5,657 in tax refunds. As many as 800,000 eligible Californians are missing out on the EITC, leaving more than a billion dollars on the table, according to a new report published through a collaboration between the New America Foundation and economists at California State University at Fresno. In 2006, Fresno County residents alone missed out on \$45.6 million as more than twenty percent of the county's eligible federal tax filers did not claim EITC.

“WE Connect is about putting money back into the pockets of California's hard-working families,” said Shriver. “If all eligible families took full advantage of EITC, they would create a billion dollars of economic activity for California's businesses and economic growth for California's communities, which leads to more jobs and opportunities for everyone.”

WE Connect Weekend attendees will have the opportunity to use the WE Connect program's **Web Connector**, an exclusive, easy-to-use online tool developed by **Intuit** that helps working families determine exactly which programs they may be eligible for with step by step instructions for how to apply. Californians can access this free tool any time at www.WEConnect.net.

“Intuit and its Financial Freedom Foundation are committed to programs that increase financial literacy and empower people to save and make money,” said Brad Smith, president and CEO of Intuit. “In partnership with California First Lady Maria Shriver's WE Connect campaign, we're connecting hard working Californians, individuals and families statewide, to numerous money-saving programs and helping them take advantage of unclaimed state and federal dollars, like the Earned Income Tax Credit.”

During the event on Sunday, Home Depot and HandsOn Central California will be leading a Family Service Project open to kids of all ages. Families will be working with other community volunteers in creating potted vegetable gardens that they can take home or donate to families in need.

The community partners that have teamed up with WE Connect Weekend Fresno include: Central California Legal Services, Intuit, HandsOn Central California, United Way of Fresno County, Community Food Bank of Fresno, 211, Internal Revenue Service, La Opinión, Home Depot, Comcast, Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Markets, The California Endowment, The California Association of Foodbanks, The Fresno County Fairgrounds, Fresno Healthy Communities Access Partners (HCAP), California Employment Development Department (EDD), Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board (WIB), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The California Community Colleges, Clinica Sierra Vista, The Fresno County Department of Public Health and the Housing Authorities of the City and County of Fresno.

First Lady Maria Shriver and The Women's Conference will be hosting a second **WE Connect Weekend event in Los Angeles at The Forum from March 26-28, 2010**. More information about WE Connect Weekend events and the WE Connect program can be found at www.WEConnect.net.

About WE Connect

First launched by Shriver in 2005, the WE Connect program model is now being emulated by 24 other states. In addition to the WE Connect events and the WEb Connector tool, WE Connect has partnered with organizations across the state to communicate with people in new and innovative ways. Through a partnership with La Opinión, the nation's largest Spanish-speaking newspaper, WE Connect has developed three editions of a 24-page, full color, bi-lingual supplement that has been distributed to over 20 million Californians in need. WE Connect has also worked with partners to create permanent WE Connect Neighborhood Centers in Fresno, Santa Ana and Irvine. In December 2009, The Women's Conference created the WE Connect–Million Meals Initiative, as the organization made a donation to The California Association of Food Banks to provide more than one million meals to California families in need. The donation was allocated to the food bank's 44 member organizations who then distributed the food to California families through its more than 5,000 community-based organizations.

About The Women's Conference

The Mission of The Women's Conference Organization is to create Architects of Change -- people from all walks of life who see a problem and seek to create the solution, be it in their home, their community, their state or our world. Led California First Lady Maria Shriver, The Women's Conference

has created a global community of Architects of Change who gather every year at the nation's premier forum for women in Long Beach, CA. More than 25,000 women attend the two-day nonpartisan conference and many thousands more watch the event live online. WomensConference.org — the Home for Architects of Change — has become a thriving online community of more than one million women who visit the site to be empowered with daily editorial and video content, inspirational conversations and stories, and life-changing tips, tools and resources. The Women's Conference has formed strategic partnerships with established organizations to create lasting change through six far-reaching programs – WE Educate, WE Invest, WE Connect, WE Act, WE Inspire and WE Honor. Through these programs, The Women's Conference community works together 24/7 on the front-lines of humanity to finance dreams and invest in entrepreneurs, lift people out of poverty, help end the cycle of violence, send young women to college, build community centers, playgrounds and gardens, honor courage, wisdom and strength, and inspire people by the remarkable history of their state. For more information about The Women's Conference, visit: <http://www.womensconference.org>.

About Intuit

Intuit Inc. is a leading provider of business and financial management solutions for small and mid-sized businesses; financial institutions, including banks and credit unions; consumers and accounting professionals. Its flagship products and services, including QuickBooks®, Quicken® and TurboTax®, simplify small business management and payroll processing, personal finance, and tax preparation and filing. ProSeries® and Lacerte® are Intuit's leading tax preparation offerings for professional accountants. The company's financial institutions division, anchored by Digital Insight, provides on-demand banking services to help banks and credit unions serve businesses and consumers with innovative solutions. Founded in 1983, Intuit had annual revenue of \$3.1 billion in its fiscal year 2009. The company has approximately 7,800 employees with major offices in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, India and other locations. More information can be found at www.intuit.com.

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