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Local United Way Fundraising Campaign Kicks Off To Address Needs Right Here at Home

WAUKESHA – The United Way campaign is kicking off amidst a strained economy, and although last year’s campaign effort resulted in local programs being cut 5%, Waukesha County’s campaign leadership stands determined to raise \$4.3 million on behalf of individuals and families struggling in Waukesha County.

The \$4.3 million goal was recently set by the United Way in Waukesha County Board of Directors and represents a 1% increase over the 2009 results of \$4,261,000. “Although this is a tough fundraising environment, we cannot ignore the acute need in Waukesha County,” stated United Way Board President Paul Melnick. “There are many consistent themes among our local nonprofit community...loss in funding; increased demand for services, especially in the area of basic needs; and an overall increase in stress levels among Waukesha County families due to job loss and other uncertainties. It’s up to leadership organizations like United Way in Waukesha County to call our community into action,” stated Melnick.

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When asked to comment on how the economy has affected programming, all responses from United Way-funded agencies spoke to the ever-increasing need for services. Rachel Fjellman, Social Services Director at Salvation Army of Waukesha said, “The Family Services program has seen an increase of 42% in the number of visits to the food pantry since 2007, with a current increase of 12% year to date in 2010 from last year.” In addition to the need for food-pantry services, the need for healthcare-related services has soared. Carroll Delaney, spokesperson for Community Outreach Health Clinic, attributed the Clinic’s 27% increase in patient volume to the growing number of uninsured and underinsured people in Waukesha County who are unable to afford basic health care. Delaney referenced the importance of community support during these tough times. “Now more than ever, we count on United Way and other community support to enable us to continue to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents, many of whom are without health insurance for the first time in their lives.”

2010 Annual Campaign Chair Dave Vetta is cautiously optimistic about the fall fundraising effort. “We have been working diligently since early spring to define our campaign strategies and seek the involvement of several volunteer champions,” stated Vetta. “We have connected with our top supporters to forecast our potential based on their current business conditions, and we have focused time and energy around increasing participation,” he added. Currently, there are approximately 500 community organizations and businesses that support the Waukesha County United Way along with more than 14,000 individual donors. This presents a tremendous opportunity for organizations and individuals alike to become involved for the first time.

“There have been several recent headlines relative to local agencies receiving funding cuts while at the same time experiencing unprecedented needs,” stated Jayne Thoma, Executive Director of United Way in Waukesha County. “Our fall campaign effort is focused on bringing the giving community together

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through United Way to provide a stable and dependable source of revenue for those nonprofits that are striving to improve more lives than ever before,” she added.

Early results of the Campaign will soon be reported by several Pacesetter organizations that began their campaigns in August. The following organizations have agreed to set the pace for the community campaign by running their campaigns early and setting goals to increase giving by 5%: First Business Bank; MetalTek International, Wisconsin Centrifugal Division; R&R Insurance Services, Inc.; Tailored Label Products, Inc.; and UPS.

Dollars raised in the annual campaign will be directed by local volunteers to more than 30 local agencies providing over 60 programs as well as collaborations designed to Help Kids Succeed, Build Financial Stability, Keep Caregivers Healthy, Promote Early Learning, and Provide Transportation for community members in need of services. For more information about your local United Way, visit the organization’s website at www.UnitedWayWaukesha.org or call their office at 262-547-8459 to get involved.

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