

United Way lifts fundraising goal

\$700K sought in support of nonprofits

By JOHN FLOWERS

MIDDLEBURY — The United Way of Addison County (UWAC) has announced a \$700,000 goal for its 2022-2023 fundraising campaign, which will officially kick off in two weeks with a “Days of Caring” event that will see area residents volunteer for chores at some of the organization’s 32 nonprofit affiliates.

The \$700,000 target represents UWAC’s first stab at an increased goal in three years and is based in part on three consecutive years of exceeding a goal of \$635,000, according to United Way Development & Marketing Director Erin Reed.

“We feel the needs are increasing,

and we’ve seen great response from our community during the past few campaign years,” Reed said. “We feel confident the community will step up and help us meet this new goal.”

“We’re seeing budgets tighten for individuals and nonprofits in our county.”

— UWAC
Executive
Director Helena
Van Voorst

The motto for this year’s campaign is “Together We Can,” summing up the United Way’s philosophy that if everyone pitches in, the county can find solutions to perennial problems like homelessness and hunger.

“It speaks to the power of collaboration, which is one of Addison County’s greatest strengths,”

UWAC Executive Director Helena Van Voorst said.

More resources and collaboration
(See United Way, Page 11A)



UNITED WAY OF Addison County Executive Director Helena Van Voorst, left, and Erin Reed, the organization's development & marketing director, are getting ready to embark on a 2022-2023 drive intended to raise \$700,000 for nonprofits helping local people in need.

Independent photo/John Flowers

United Way

(Continued from Page 1A)

will be essential to meet what United Way officials believe is going to be increased pressure on area nonprofits. Reed and Van Voorst noted more state and federal COVID-19 assistance programs have expired this year, and at a time when household budgets are under assault from inflation. Also, those who rely on fossil fuels are going to see their winter home heating bills climb.

"We're seeing budgets tighten for individuals and nonprofits in our county," Van Voorst said.

As has been the case for the past several years, a development subcommittee of the UWAC board will lead the 2023 campaign, as opposed to a member of the community.

"It's still a volunteer effort; it just has taken a different format," said Van Voorst.

The new format led to a board that's more actively involved in the annual fund drive, with individual members more in tune with community needs, Van Voorst noted.

And area residents and business leaders will soon be able to get an up-close look at the charitable organizations that are part of UWAC. The Days of Caring, set for Sept. 22 and 24, will see dozens of individuals and local employees perform tasks for nonprofits like the Addison County Parent-Child Center, WomenSafe, Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects and the Counseling Service of Addison County. That free labor will be used for jobs ranging from painting fences to fine-tuning websites.

Van Voorst was pleased to report that COVID-19 conditions have eased to a point where Days of Caring volunteers can return to in-person assistance, rather than lending a virtual hand.

As was the case last year, UWAC's major fundraiser for the 2023 campaign will be the "0.5-Kilometer Race for the Rest of Us." It'll take place on Sunday, Oct. 9, from 3-6 p.m., at UWAC headquarters at 175 Wilson Road (also home to Middlebury Fitness). The cost will be \$15 for adults and \$5 for children. Participants will be able walk, run, skip or dance along

the Wilson Road 0.5-K route. The event will also include food, games, music and more. All funds raised will help strengthen the health, education, and financial stability of Addison County. Register at tinyurl.com/bdds4w2t.

If there's carryover from the success of the 2021-2022 campaign, UWAC officials have ample cause to be optimistic for the new donation drive. Last year's campaign yielded \$769,168, from 950 donors. As could be expected, 689 donors to last year's campaign gave less than \$1,000. But the campaign also received:

- 17 contributions of more than \$10,000, also referred to as the United Way's "Tocqueville" giving category.
- 19 "Robert Frost Platinum" gifts of \$7,500 and \$9,999.
- 16 "Robert Frost Gold" gifts of \$5,000 to \$7,499.
- 32 "Robert Frost Silver" donations of \$2,500 to \$4,999.
- 76 "Robert Frost" gifts of \$1,250-\$2,499.
- 45 "Leadership" gifts of \$1,000-\$1,249.

UWAC also received payroll deduction contributions from individual businesses. Those remain a declining percentage of the United Way's annual harvest — and that's a nationwide trend for philanthropic organizations, according to Van Voorst.

SMALL BUSINESSES

While giving through payroll deduction is on the decline, Van Voorst said that shouldn't be seen as fading commitment on the part of the business community. She noted entrepreneurs have found a new giving outlet through UWAC's "365 Small Business Circle," whose members can give at levels ranging from \$365 per year (\$1 per day) to \$1,465 annually (\$4 per day) and receive various publicity and/or recognition perks through the United Way.

Small Business Circle members can also donate their time and expertise to UWAC and its affiliates.

"The generosity of our local businesses ... continues to be so strong," Van Voorst said.

Each year, on a rotating basis, UWAC likes to earmark some of the

funds it raises for specific categories of needs: health care, education and financial stability. This year, the so-called "community impact funding" will be designated for education. That's mean some extra resources for nonprofit affiliates that have an educational bent, such as childcare centers, teen centers and workforce training hubs.

"It's about improving educational outcomes for all people in Addison County," Van Voorst stressed.

Placing a premium on outcomes and long-range planning have helped make UWAC much more than a conduit for donated resources to get to local agencies helping people in need. The United Way has grown into a vehicle for change. To that end, the organization is planning two initiatives that could pay long-range dividends for the county:

- Creation of an action plan to get the area's houseless population better access to health care services.

The United Way recently won an \$86,000 Homeless Health Equity grant to assemble the master plan, and the money must be spent by next May, Van Voorst said. UWAC will solicit input from many sources, including area physicians, advocates, mental health professionals, clinics, homeless shelters and, of course, those among the houseless population.

- A free seminar featuring consultants from Vital Leadership Coaching, who will give representatives of local charitable organizations tips on how to lead during "times of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity," according to Van Voorst. The all-day event will be held at the Middlebury Inn on Oct. 21. Keep an eye on the UWAC newsletter to learn more and how to register.

"It's going to be about moving from knowing what the problems are, to actual action," Van Voorst said. "We know we need more housing, we know childcare needs to be more affordable. How do we as a community take small steps toward lasting change?"

For more information about UWAC and its 2022-2023 campaign, log onto unitedwayaddisoncounty.org.