

Local United Way launches \$175,000 campaign

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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Northern Ozaukee agency kicks off 60th anniversary fund drive that lowers target in face of tough economy

The United Way of Northern Ozaukee kicked off its 60th anniversary celebration and fund-raising campaign Tuesday, hoping to raise \$175,000 to benefit 16 area nonprofit agencies.

That goal is \$10,000 less than last year's, a reflection of the struggling economy and the fact that the United Way did not meet last year's goal, Executive Director Kathie Schaefer acknowledged.

"Boy, we didn't want to do that," she said. "It was difficult to come up with a number the community will be able to support — a realistic number.

"Things have changed. The needs everywhere are increasing. At the same time, things have changed with our companies, too."

A number of local businesses have either closed their doors or laid off workers, Schaefer noted, and people who are still employed are struggling to make ends meet.

A report by Ozaukee Family Services shows that in 2009, 1,266 households received food shares, compared to 943 a year earlier, and 6,208 people qualified for medical assistance, compared to 4,736 the previous year, Schaefer noted.

The United Way opened its campaign with its Day of Caring Tuesday, with 10 of its board members helping with Family Fun Night at Ozaukee Family Services in Grafton.

For most county residents, however, the campaign will begin next week when fund-raising flyers are sent to them and workplace campaigns begin.

Workplace campaigns typically begin in October or November. Residents who work outside the county are encouraged to designate the United Way of Northern Ozaukee as the place where their contributions should be sent, Schaefer said.

To help celebrate its anniversary, and promote its campaign, the United Way is holding a drawing. Anyone who contributes \$60 or more to the campaign will be entered into the drawing for donated prizes that include baskets, pottery, entertainment items and dinner certificates.

The United Way of Northern Ozaukee has its root in the Community Chest of Port Washington, which was formed in 1950 by a group of businessmen who wanted to consolidate fund-raising efforts in the city, Schaefer said. The group set its fund-raising goal at \$5,000, which went to finance 11 agencies.

In 1962, the group became the United Fund of Port Washington. By 1969, it was the United Way of Port Washington and Saukville; and in 1998 the name changed again to United Way of

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“Someone years ago called us the little engine that could,” Schaefer said.

“We want people to realize that by giving to United Way, they are giving to 16 different agencies. The money is well used by these agencies to benefit people in our county.”

These agencies include Advocates of Ozaukee, American Red Cross, Balance, Bay Lakes Council of the Boy Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ozaukee, Cope Services, Family Sharing of Ozaukee, Girl Scouts of Manitou Council, Interfaith Caregivers of Ozaukee County, Starting Point, Ozaukee County Circle of Friends, Ozaukee County Jail Literacy Program, Ozaukee Family Services, Portal Industries, Salvation Army and the Volunteer Center of Ozaukee County.

Barbara Dickmann is chairman of this year’s United Way campaign.