

# 2008 CAMPAIGN

## UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

### Most Frequently Asked Questions & Important Information

- What does the United Way of Southwest Michigan do?

Response:

United Way of Southwest Michigan is working to **Advance The Common Good** by focusing on three key areas:

- 1) **Education**
- 2) **Income**
- 3) **Health**

These are the building blocks for a good life – a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health. In addition to finding help and support for those who require basic human service needs, one of United Way’s primary goals is to create long-lasting changes that will prevent problems from happening in the first place.

United Way is at the heart of giving, serving and knowing our community. Because of its close working relationship with agencies, businesses, individuals and others who have the knowledge, desire and capacity to help, United Way is where people call to be informed, to get direction and guidance, and to find help when it is needed most.

United Way has the support and involvement of the community’s movers and shakers – the people who want to be a part of making lasting change in here in Southwest Michigan. We invite you to **Give, Advocate or Volunteer** in order to help create opportunities for a better tomorrow. That’s what it means to **LIVE UNITED**.

*(Please refer to the rubric chart outlining the components of our LIVE UNITED structure.)*

- What is United Way of Southwest Michigan’s service area?

Response:

**United Way of Southwest Michigan now serves two counties – Berrien and Cass counties.**

Two years ago, the Cass County United Way became part of United Way of Southwest Michigan in order to reduce their administrative costs and have the resources necessary to better serve the people of Cass County.

**IM PORTANT: All dollars raised in Berrien and Cass counties stay in their respective county unless otherwise designated by the donor.** On this year’s pledge form, you will see two separate lists of United Way funded agencies – one list representing agencies funded in Berrien County and another list representing those funded in Cass County.

Besides the United Way of Southwest Michigan, there is also the United Way of Greater Niles that raises funds exclusively in the Niles community and distributes those funds to human service agencies serving the people of Niles.

- Too much of the money raised by United Way is used for administrative and marketing expenses.

Response:

**Nearly 86 cents of every dollar – 86% of our total amount raised – is used to fund programs that provide services to the people of our community** to improve the quality of life in Berrien County.

Because United Way is run by local volunteers, it is able to keep its costs relatively low so that more money can be spent on health and human services. Any charitable organization with administrative costs less than 25% is viewed as a good steward of the donors’ dollars.

- **Most of the money goes to United Way of America. I want my gift to help local people.**

Response:

Less than one percent of the overall dollars raised is provided as a membership fee to United Way of America. This fee is reviewed by our local Board of Directors and is subject to its approval. In turn our membership rights include the usage of the United Way trademark and name, research materials, access to discounted materials and staff training opportunities.

- **Who decides how contributions are spent?**

Response:

Local volunteers serve on the Community Impact committee. They examine detailed budget and service information and visit each agency to see the programs in action. During the review process, volunteers have the opportunity to thoroughly discuss the materials and information submitted. The final decisions made by the United Way Board of Directors are guided by research into community needs, measurable outcomes from the agencies to show community impact, funds available to meet the needs, and knowledge of the community. This process assures you that United Way dollars are well spent. Currently the United Way of Southwest Michigan provides funding to 21 agencies in Berrien County and to 14 agencies in Cass County.

- **Someone I know needed help from United Way and did not get it. Why?**

Response:

United Way funds programs—where individuals get help. Without knowing the specifics regarding your friend's need and what type of help they were seeking, I do not know what might have happened. Perhaps the person asked for a service the agency could not provide, or went to the wrong agency for services needed, or went to an agency that was not affiliated with United Way. If you'd like, I can take their name and telephone number so that United Way can research what happened. United Way will be happy to follow up providing an answer, and if necessary, assistance.

- **What are the advantages of contributing to United Way?**

Response:

- United Way multiplies your impact in improving people's lives and our community.
- United Way is your partner, using its professional and volunteer expertise together to improve people's lives and our community.
- United Way lets you know what is being accomplished with your contributions.
- United Way appreciates your caring and commitment to improving people's lives and our community.

In addition, United Way is local, accountable & efficient.

- **I volunteer my time at an agency. Why should I make a financial contribution?**

Response:

Volunteers are important to not-for-profit agencies. They allow the agencies to focus their limited financial resources on helping people. However, it is important for the agencies to have the financial support needed to provide services to people in need. The combination of your time and financial support will help ensure a good quality of life in Southwest Michigan.

- **There is a United Way partner agency I don't like. I will have nothing to do with United Way because it funds this agency.**

Response:

We respect your opinion. Remember though, that a variety of services are offered by United Way partner agencies throughout Southwest Michigan, and **one out of five Berrien County residents** uses these services. You may, of course, designate your gift to a partner agency that you do like.

- **Why doesn't United Way fund agencies like the American Cancer Society or the March of Dimes?**

Response:

These agencies may not have applied for United Way funding. Some agencies have other sources of income and do not need United Way dollars to fund their services. Any agency that does not duplicate services can be considered for funding. In some cases, agencies choose not to join due to their national organization's policies or because they cannot meet the certification criteria established by United Way.

- **United Way only helps people in Benton Harbor.**

Response:

United Way helps people in all communities in Berrien County. Last year, United Way services touched the lives of people from all parts of Berrien County, more than 35,000 times – one out of every five people in Berrien County is helped by a United Way funded program.

- **I thought United Way funded Hospice, but I don't see it on the pledge form.**

Response:

United Way did fund Hospice as a United Way partner agency at one time, and United Way helped it get started in Berrien County. We funded this organization for several years, but then Hospice withdrew its funding request from United Way because it no longer needed United Way funds – this occurred primarily because of the Medicare reimbursement that Hospice was able to obtain. United Way continues to have a strong relationship with Hospice.

- **Does United Way provide funding to other organizations besides the partner agencies?**

Yes, through United Way's Flexi-Fund grants, we are able to provide funding for new and innovative programs that meet emerging needs in our community, beyond our 21 partner agencies. Here are just a few examples:

- Berrien County RESA (Parents as Teachers Program)
- Junior Achievement
- Lory's Place

United Way also provides annual mini-grants to communities in Berrien County which are outside of the St. Joseph/Benton Harbor area. These are one-time grants designed to fund community-based programs through local non-profit organizations. These programs must fall within one of United Way's three Focus Areas: *Education, Income and Health*.

- **Has United Way of Southwest Michigan admitted any new partner agencies since last year?**

No – we have the same partner agencies this year as we had last year.

- **Is United Way still supporting our local American Red Cross Chapter?**

United Way of Southwest Michigan continues long-time funding to programs at the Berrien County Chapter of the American Red Cross, including:

- Health and Safety Education
- Disaster and Military Emergency Services
- Blood Program

Partner Agency funding for these areas of the Chapter's focus is through June of 2009.

The local Chapter was also the recipient of a special Community Investment Grant this year to teach hygiene and personal care to children in Kindergarten through third grade, in the Three Oaks/New Buffalo area, called "Scrubby Bear"

**If there are additional questions regarding the American Red Cross, please call Anna Murphy directly at: (269) 925-7772.**

## **IN ADDITION, DID YOU KNOW...**

- United Way of Southwest Michigan is partnering with the YMCA Family Center of St. Joseph/Benton Harbor to bring *Girls on the Run (GOTR)* to Berrien County. Girls on the Run is a national, non-profit prevention program for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls that combines an interactive curriculum with running to help girls develop self-respect and healthy lifestyles. Berrien County is now one of over 180 operational GOTR councils in North America that have served over 40,000 girls to-date.
- A United Way partnership effort with the ISD resulted in Berrien County recently being designated as a Great Start Collaborative county. This project will focus on the collaborative coordination of early childhood programs throughout the county. United Way of Southwest Michigan provided \$8,000 in matching funds to secure over \$160,000 in grant money that will help ensure the project's implementation.
- United Way of southwest Michigan has joined with 550 other United Ways in all 50 states to help lower the cost of prescription medicines for families with little or no prescription drug coverage. A partnership with the FamilyWize prescription drug discount program will provide an average 35% discount on the cost of prescriptions through the distribution of the FamilyWize prescription drug card available at pharmacies all over Southwest Michigan.
- United Way provided the start-up funding for the now Partner Agency program, Nurse Family Partnership, a program to address infant mortality and child abuse. When the program began six years ago, Berrien County was ranked as one of the worst in Michigan for infant mortality. Berrien County now falls below the state infant mortality average of 8.1 percent with a goal of 4.5% by 2010.
- A United Way original investment of \$138,000 for Berrien County Intermediate School Early Childhood Development returned over \$1.7 million in grants. In 2006, United Way of Southwest Michigan awarded a multi-year grant to continue early childhood development. These two grants resulted in a total return of more than \$2 million into Berrien County.
- United Way provided support, promotion and referral to the Earned Income Tax Credit Program. This program brought \$224,508 back into our community to 932 low-income Berrien County households. With average gross household incomes of \$11,429, imagine the impact of this credit for these families!
- United Way of Southwest Michigan is a member of the 2-1-1 Operations Council, a statewide effort to bring 2-1-1 to Southwest Michigan and provide a more effective information and referral system to families and individuals.
- As a critical partner in county-wide disaster preparedness planning, United Way led the implementation of COAD (Community Organizations Assisting in Disaster) committee, which helps to ensure that our community agencies are ready if a disaster should strike.

**IF YOU HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS  
OR NEED ANY OTHER INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CONTACT  
THE UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN:**

**269-925-7772**