

The News-Gazette



Champaign-Urbana, Danville and East Central Illinois

\$4.00

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BREAKING NEWS AT NEWS-GAZETTE.COM

Year 172, No. 173

A century of sharing and caring



\$123,194,447.70

raised, countless community members reached. Here's to United Way of Champaign County on its 100th birthday, and to its army of generous gift givers, whose contributions — from five bucks deducted out of every paycheck to five-figure annual donations — have gone toward helping neighbors who need it most. Today, we (along with 377 of the organization's biggest fans) celebrate a century's worth of good deeds — by local people, for local people.

— JEFF D'ALESSIO



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UNITED WAY AT 100



May we have a word about United Way?

 Belated apologies to the 328 of you we asked the impossible of — to sum up United Way of Champaign County's impact, or how it feels to be a part of it, in a single word. "One word?!" replied Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell. "This is tough to choose," wrote Lisa Rector. "So many words come to mind," said Jayne DeLuce. You'll see them all — from "altruism" (Kara Johnson) and "authentic" (Joe Williams) to "warriors" (Joan Dykstra) and "worthwhile" (Ben LeRoy) — on the top of this page and the tops and bottoms of most of the 26 that come after it, part of the community's salute to a 100-year-old nonprofit that's downright "essential" (selected by 14 of our panelists). "I shudder to think what our community would be like without the efforts of the United Way," said one of them, Lacey Rains Lowe, a senior planner for the city of Champaign, a proud member of United Way's Million Dollar Circle of Caring. Added Dan Marker, Champaign region president at the Battle of the Paddle-sponsoring Hickory Point Bank: "I'm not sure how many of our community nonprofits would survive without the support of United Way of Champaign County." (For much more on that point, turn to A-4). From the University of Illinois, donor Trish Barker chose "ubiquitous" — because "wherever you go in our com-



The United Way of Champaign County leadership team, circa 2009, from left: **Cindy Somers, Tony Clements, Bob Mulcahey** and **Curt Anderson**.

munity, and whoever you are, the United Way's support and impact are there." After "a lot of thought and several trips to the encyclopedia," Chuck Van Vorst settled on "trustworthy." "It's based on the vetting process that is used to qualify agencies, verify the need and certify that the monies are going where they are intended," the former Carle CEO explained. Meyer Capel's Pat Fitzgerald and former First Busey Corp. President Barb Kuhl

both went with "empowering," with Kuhl citing "their amazing job of empowering our community to be its best — all the volunteers who have been engaged with this organization have been empowered and certainly those who are the recipients of the United Way's work are empowered." Cunningham Children's Home's Sharla Jolly picked "significant." As in: "Our community is significantly better because of their work." After sleeping on it for a

night, John Farney thought "underappreciated" best said it. "The local United Way does so much for our community that happens in the background," added Champaign County's former treasurer and auditor. "Their grants go to so many organizations that make a daily impact, yet most people don't realize that the funds, or some of the funds, come through United Way donations." "I think that if our community truly realized how

much United Way does for it, participation in fundraising opportunities would grow exponentially." We heard some variation of "transformative" from 22 community members, including Power of the Purse-supporting Champaign photographer Emily Donohoe. "The lives of the people they affect are truly being transformed because of the programs the United Way creates, sponsors and participates in," said the Pixels by Emily owner. Mila Thomas Fuller cast one of five votes for "compassionate," with the Nothing Bundt Cakes owner offering: "This was tough because I love all that they do and so many positive adjectives come to mind. Compassion is a very powerful emotion that drives us all to act from a space of kindness. That's huge to me." "When I reflect on their charitable giving campaigns and activities — and their large-scale events like Power of the Purse — it truly builds community and drives us to act in positive ways to make a difference in our community." Champaign attorney Brooke Didier Starks took "enduring," noting: "United Way has stood the test of time — that's why it gets to celebrate 100 years — and I believe it will continue to stand the test of time." "That's why I feel confident donating." **Jeff D'Alessio is editor of The News-Gazette. He can be reached at jdalessio@news-gazette.com.**



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AVERAGE RATING






“

On behalf of all of us at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, congratulations to the United Way of Champaign County on your 100th anniversary.

Thank you for being such an important and enduring pillar of our community!

Chancellor Robert J. Jones



UNITED WAY AT 100



'I never forget that each number is a person with a name'

A dozen years and \$43-plus million in local giving ago, the United Way of Champaign County board handed the reins of the nonprofit to lifelong Champaign resident and former Centennial Charger **SUE GREY**. And the rest, as they say, is herstory. The third woman to serve as its president and CEO — a distinction previously held by Tammy Lemke and Lyn Jones — Grey answered a few questions.

What leader or volunteer from United Way's past inspires you?

Years ago, Bob Toalson encouraged me to volunteer with United Way, and I became a loaned executive. To say the experience was life-changing is an understatement.

I met Carol Scharlau, Carol Shupp, Pat Chapel and Pat Schutt — those four women were the best. We had so much fun doing good work in the community. I have had great bosses who have taught me so much — Tammy Lemke and Lyn Jones, Tony Clements as an interim CEO and all the board chairs and board members.

I hope United Way continues to attract visionary community leaders who want to get things done for our community.

The latest Community Impact report shows that United Way's grants directly affected 42,186 people in the community last year. Any stories beyond the numbers that people might not know?

I never forget that each number is a person with a name. Like Mia, a mom with three children, who was living in her car and at



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

Sue Grey, front and center, leads the all-woman United Way of Champaign County team. Seated behind her, from left: **Cathy Baird**, **Becca Guyette** and **Beverley Baker**. Standing: **Anne Clark Skuse**, **Carolyn Butterfield**, **Mary Noel Stefan**, **Javaite Burton**, **Krissy Webber**, **Ayla Dew** and **Emily Neal**.

the end of her rope. With support from our grant partners, Mia was able to access an emergency shelter, connect with services for her child with mental health issues, find employment, build a plan for her future and transition to permanent housing.

Mia worked incredibly hard to turn her life around, and our community supported her.

The network of care that helped Mia this past year was built carefully and intentionally —

much of it through grants funded by United Way supporters. United Way has worked on housing issues for over 15 years, building partnerships with groups like the Regional Planning Commission and the Housing Authority of Champaign County that provided shelter and case management for Mia and her children.

Without the significant unrestricted resources it took to build these partnerships and award grants to the programs that

helped her, Mia's story could have had a different ending. We know there's more work to be done and gaps in systems that need to be filled. I am grateful for the support that makes creative solutions possible and helps us work toward our mission — positive change and lasting impact.

What do you see as the most significant challenges facing the community in the future?

United Way exists to serve this

community and improve the lives of the people who call it home. Looking back to when I first started as a volunteer at United Way, our community's population has grown by 20 percent.

Our challenge is to think bigger and secure the resources needed to support our growing community. From food and housing to early education, employment, mental health care and senior citizen support, the human service programs in Champaign County that do this important work rely heavily on local support.

I'm incredibly fortunate to work alongside a team of passionate staff and volunteers who continually push the boundaries of what's possible. Just this past year, they connected with local donors to secure significant support to launch the Dolly Parton Imagination Library — a program our community has requested for several years.

We're also advocating tirelessly at all levels of government to ensure our partners receive the support they need. I'm grateful for the volunteer leaders who share our vision and drive — this work isn't possible without them.

The community has trusted United Way for a century during good times and challenging times. Our successful United for a Century campaign speaks volumes about our commitment to stewarding resources and doing right by our neighbors. As I look ahead, a major focus remains on strengthening our endowment — a resilient foundation that will empower United Way to tackle whatever lies ahead with confidence and determination.

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SPECIALTIES



207

MEDICAL PROVIDERS



23

LOCATIONS



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UNITED WAY AT 100



IF NOT FOR UNITED WAY ...

Celebrating 100th birthdays in 2024: Soldier Field, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Wheaties and the community treasure that, after a couple of name changes, would become United Way of Champaign County. ¶ Of course, the Community Chest of Champaign-Urbana (est. 1924) bore little resemblance to United Way as we've come to know it today, with its first annual campaign funding nine agencies: the Anti-Tuberculosis League, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Family Welfare Society, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the University YMCA, the Urbana Railroad YMCA and the Humane Society. ¶ This past fiscal year, **the number of local nonprofits and organizations divvying up \$2,613,320 worth of United Way grants totaled 53.** ¶ We asked 27 of their leaders to finish this sentence: If not for United Way of Champaign County ...

→ **Daily Bread Soup Kitchen** "would not be able to assist our guests with bus passes or help them establish their identities," grants coordinator and and volunteer **Ruth Ann Evans** says. "The mission of the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen is to feed the hungry in our community. With additional resources from United Way, we try to help our guests have a better quality of life. Access to transportation allows people the opportunity to seek employment and access social service agencies and health care facilities. "Because many of our guests are homeless or transient, they do not have legal documents that prove their identities. United Way allows us to extend our services to our guests; hundreds of the most in need in our community have benefited from their support."



RUTH ANN EVANS OF DAILY BREAD SOUP KITCHEN

Bottom Line diaper bank the diaper bank would be going away and what can we do to keep it in our community? The very next week, the UW team had a plan of action and now, years later, the **Bottom Line Diaper Bank** is still going strong, serving 11 early childhood programs and helping so many children and families."

→ The Rantoul-based **Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County** "simply could not accomplish our mission — to feed and provide other services to over 3,000 families this year," Executive Director **Cindy Crawford** says.



CRAWFORD

→ **Habitat for Humanity** "would not be able to enact our mission of putting God's love into action to build homes, community and hope with partner families," Executive Director **Chad Hoffman** says.

→ "Our community would not have Mother Goose on the Loose" and the 25,000 free books that have come with it since launching in 2018, says **Brittany Millington**, director of the **Champaign Public Library**. "Mother Goose on the Loose is an early literacy outreach program, which was brought to our community through partnership between the library and United Way. Mother Goose provides story times and free books to children in an effort to build kindergarten readiness, home libraries and a lifelong love of reading."

→ **Cunningham Children's Home's HopeSprings Counseling Services** would be one staff member down, without the funds to "add a registered play therapist to our clinical team and develop our play therapy and sensory services," Associate Director **Dawn Cluver** says.

→ The **CU Schools Foundation** wouldn't have received the \$9,800 in grant funding during the throes of the pandemic that, combined with \$25,000 of CUSF's own grant money, allowed Unit 4 and District 116 to buy books from Orphan's Treasure Box, Scholastic, Amazon and First Book, Executive Director **Kelly Hill** says.

→ The **YWCA of the University of Illinois** "would not be celebrating our 100th STRIVE client," Executive Director **Andrea Rundell** says of a program that teaches basic digital skills to people so they can get a better job or continue their education.



RUNDELL

→ "Our community may not have had a men's emergency shelter in the winters of 2016-18," says **Faith United Methodist's Doug Abbott**. "In 2016, when our community was facing the possibility of winter without a men's emergency shelter, United Way joined forces with our church and several local churches to fill that need. The churches, in partnership with United Way, continued to operate the winter shelter until operations were transferred to C-U at Home in 2019."



ABBOTT



Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club

→ The Champaign college and career readiness program **Operation Hope** would not have a female career services placement liaison. Take it from program coordinator **Sheldon Turner**, who'll never forget the question United Way President/CEO Sue Grey posed to him during a meeting years ago: "She said: 'You know what, Sheldon? What if we had a female that does the work you do but only focused on the girls?'"



TURNER

"Sold. "Of course, I said 'Yes, what a great idea,' because at the time it was only me working with males and females. Although there are issues that both males and females share, there are specific times that those who identify as female need a separate space or listening ear that I could not provide. The rest is history. "We are now in Year 15 and have been blessed to see over 300 young ladies graduate from the program."

→ No doubt about it: the **Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center** "would have had to reduce the number of clients who receive counseling services," Executive Director **Kari Miller** says. "The federal funding

for children's advocacy centers across the country was cut last year. When we approached United Way about our reduction in funding, Bev Baker and Javaite Burton were so helpful in guiding us through their grant process to request funds to help cover this loss. "COVID had such a negative impact on mental health of the children in our community. When you add abuse to that, the mental health of the children we provide services to is in a state of emergency. We couldn't fathom the idea that we were facing cuts to one of the most important components of our programming. "United Way of Champaign County, you are a hero to victims of abuse."



MILLER

→ The **Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club** couldn't offer the level of enriching programming to 253 elementary-aged kids — and the "invaluable opportunities for growth, learning and personal development" that comes with it, CEO **Amy Brown** says.

→ The **Housing Authority of Champaign County** "would have never been able to invest \$33,000 in safety and security upgrades through the Victory over Violence

grant," says Executive Director/CEO **Lily Walton**. → It wouldn't have been possible for the **Emergency Shelter for Families with Minor Children** to provide a place to stay for 252 households — that's 308 adults and 556 children — for a total of 54,892 bed nights, or for 95 percent of those sheltered to then find safe, stable living arrangements, the Regional Planning Commission's **Lisa Benson** says.



WALTON

→ Thirty-plus elementary students wouldn't have access to the **Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center's** Intensive Literacy program twice a week after school, says **Jeniece Mitchell**, District 116's family liaison. Nor would the center "have as many funds to pay quality staff members."



MITCHELL

→ There might very well not have been a place for needy families to get free diapers for the past decade. Says the RPC's **Kelly Russell**: "I remember calling the extraordinary Bev Baker (at United Way) and saying



Provided

→ More than 200 kids in Champaign and Rantoul "would not have increased kindergarten readiness and academic skills through the **DREAM Summer Enrichment Program**," DREAM team CEO **Tracy Dace** says.

→ **Rape Advocacy, Counseling & Education Services** "would probably not be here," Executive Director **Jaya Kolisetty** says. "During the 2016 state budget impasse, RACES was hit very hard. The agency's funding from its state contract and the federal money that passed through the state were delayed for an extended period. RACES was at risk of having to close its doors. "United Way of Champaign County stepped in to fund a position to keep crisis services going. I personally know how important that was because I chose to take that position as the sole full-time staff member. "That funding from United Way got RACES through the six months that it took before the federal funds made their way through the state and we were able to rebuild from there. RACES is bigger and stronger than it was back then but grants from the United Way of Champaign County are still an important part of ensuring that survivors in our community have access to free and confidential resources."

UNITED WAY AT 100

RESULTS



KAYLA BANKS

COLLABORATION



DAVE SEILER

EMPOWERING



BARB KUHL

EVOLVING



CHAD BARRINGER

IMPACTFUL



RON KIDDOO

LIFE-CHANGING



PAM LAU

STEADFAST



ADELAIDE AIME

TRANSFORMATIONAL



WILLIE COMER

→ **Feeding Our Kids** would have had to find another way to provide an additional 1,800 weekend food bags to Champaign County children during the 2022-23 school year, Executive Director **Alison Dupre** says. United Way made it possible via Farmers Feeding Families grants totaling \$7,321. Says Dupre: "We appreciate their support of our mission — to help alleviate childhood food insecurity in Champaign County."



people manage their spending, increase their spending and pay down debt," Sweedler says. "Money Mentors volunteers improve the financial capacity of our community."

→ **Crisis Nursery** "would not have been able to provide Uber gifts cards to (cover) emergency transportation for families during some of the coldest months of the year — when walking to the Nursery for emergency child care would not have been a safe option," Executive Director **Stephanie Record** says.



RECORD

→ **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Illinois** "would not have been able to bring our positive, impactful one-to-one mentoring relationships to thousands of children across Champaign County," Chief Operating Officer **Corey Burrows** says. "United Way provided office space for our program and eventually critically needed funding to help us launch our program services."

→ **The Well Experience** "would not have connected

with some of the amazing partner organizations we are working with," Executive Director **Stephanie Cockrell** says. "The team at the United Way is all about building a community support bridge to ensure that families who need it most are supported in every way possible."



COCKRELL



→ The **Eastern Illinois Foodbank** would have had \$45,000 less to dole out to partner pantries "to meet the elevated need in our community," President and CEO **Kelly Daly** says.

→ The task of providing volunteers and staff to "efficiently and effectively" serve more than 340 kids placed in foster homes statewide would have been quite a bit more difficult for **Champaign County Court Appointed Special Advocates**, CASA Executive Director **Rush Record** says.



Provided

The **Ramseys**, local Habitat for Humanity homeowners.

→ "Champaign County families facing the loss of their homes through foreclosure would struggle to find help," says **Susan Zielke**, managing attorney of **Land of Lincoln Legal Aid's** Champaign-based Eastern Regional Office.

"Instead, last year 28 families saved their homes through the Champaign County Foreclosure Mediation program because Land of Lincoln Legal Aid attorney Angela Boley represented them in their foreclosure case," Zielke says.

→ Elementary students in the **Rantoul City School District** wouldn't be treated to a meal or heavy snack after the final bell

rings and the **EXPLORES** after-school programs begin, Superintendent **Scott Woods** says.

United Way even "provides a secretary to keep things organized and cabinets to hold all of the games and materials for our sessions."

→ **Developmental Services Center's** Community Living program wouldn't reach as many people as it does.

Just in the past year, the program "has assisted people with over 400 medical appointments (while) 10 people experienced greater independence moving into their own home," says **Patty Walters**, DSC's executive VP of clinical services.

UNIFIER



JIM LEONARD

INCOMPARABLE



CHRISTOPHER WALTON

COLOSSAL



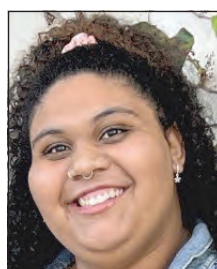
CAROLYN TRIMBLE

CONNECTOR



AMY SNYDER

INSPIRED



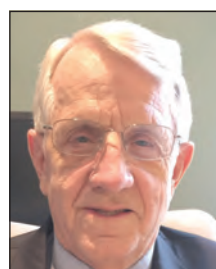
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AUSPICE



ANGI FRANKLIN

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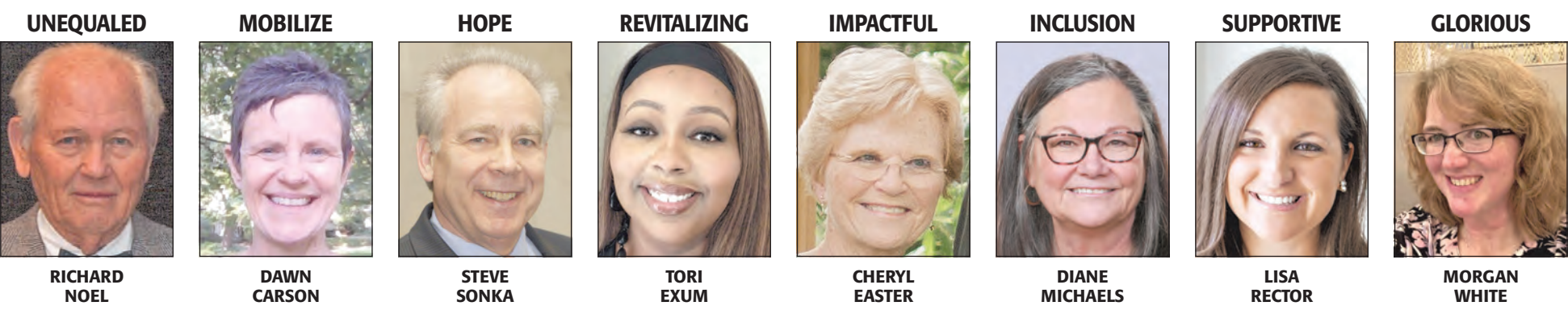
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of amazing
contributions to
our community!

With your help,
we've seen
hundreds of
Cunningham
children thrive
and families
flourish.



UNITED WAY AT 100



MY TURN: COURAGE CONNECTION CEO ELIZABETH MCGREAL COOK

‘Strategic, compassionate and deeply engaged’

For decades, United Way of Champaign County has been a committed and passionate advocate for those in our community impacted by domestic violence.

They have a dedicated history of funding initiatives to help survivors and their children regain financial independence so that the abuse they’ve experienced does not lead to long term homelessness or force survivors to return to abusers because of a lack of resources.

Never was this commitment more apparent than when Courage Connection, the only domestic violence program in Champaign County, was hit by a tsunami of financial and leadership challenges in 2019. Despite the generos-

ity of community donors, Courage Connection’s resources were depleted by the years of budget stalemates from the state. Then a search for a new CEO failed. United Way leadership took notice and then immediate action.

These leaders knew that our community could not be without comprehensive domestic violence services that provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, legal support and counseling.

Using United Way funds, they hired a full-time consultant to spend a month embedded at Courage Connection. She was highly skilled in finance, personnel and board development. Working closely with United Way, this consultant



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

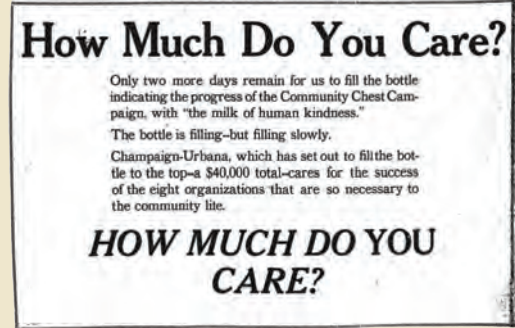
ELIZABETH MCGREAL COOK

quickly assessed all of the challenges facing Courage Connection. In partnership with United Way, a comprehensive plan was developed to secure the present and future of Courage Connection.

Fast-forward almost five years. Courage Connection has never been stronger. Not only have we grown the services we provide to the community, we are opening a second campus to provide additional transitional housing and

support to women and children in our community left homeless by domestic violence.

The value of our United Way of Champaign County goes far beyond the financial resources they provide. Their leaders are deeply connected to all of the organization they help to fund. They are strategic, compassionate and deeply engaged. Courage Connection is grateful to be a United Way-funded agency.



Even back in 1924, donors delivered beyond the campaign’s financial goal.

Flashback: 1924

It’s a cause for celebration (but it will have to be a dry one, this being Year 5 of Prohibition): The first campaign for the newly formed **Champaign-Urbana Community Chest**, which decades later would become United Way of Champaign County, raises \$42,667. In today’s dollars, that would amount to \$765,376.12 — and it is collected largely by volunteers going door to door, given that only 15 percent of Americans own cars.



Cozad Asset Management Salutes

100 Years of Impact

For 100 years, the United Way of Champaign County has been a vital force of progress and change in our community.

At Cozad Asset Management, we extend our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to this remarkable organization. As United Way steps into its next century of service, we are committed to supporting their mission of Community Impact, through enhancing student success, promoting financial stability, and improving health outcomes.

Thank you, United Way, for a century of inspiring change!



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UNITED WAY AT 100



Congratulations
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Crisis Nursery

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LIFE-CHANGING	VIBRANT	IMPACTFUL	EFFECTIVE
DIANE MARLIN	NANCY SUCHOMSKI	MARK CZYS	EMILY KNOX

OUR TURN: CAROL AND ED SCHARLAU

‘100 years of making the impossible possible’

When I think about the word *community*, I keep going back to a quote from Helen Keller — “Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.” And that is very true. We are at our best when we come together as a community, and Ed and I witnessed that over and over again during our years in C-U.

Ed and I were married in 1967, and when I think back on the almost six decades since, community has always been a guiding light for us. During our years in C-U, we had the privilege of working on so many amazing projects — from all my years working on the UI College of Education’s annual Youth Literature Festival to serving on the Parkland College Foundation board and, of course, my time at United Way.

I remember when I served as chair for United Way’s ‘86 campaign. The theme I chose was “Together We Can” and together we did! The kickoff was at the Assembly Hall and over 7,000 people showed up for a terrific program. People from every part of our community were there. Bringing together people from all different backgrounds with all different stories and life experiences is such an important part of community and when that happens, it is pure magic.

During my almost 30



The **Scharlaus** are lifelong United Way champions — **Ed**, the retired vice chairman at First Busey Corp., and **Carol**, a longtime staff member at the nonprofit.

years at United Way, I brought people together like this for many events and causes — I’ve organized, I’ve painted houses, I’ve served meals. I love bringing people together for a project or cause. Because as we all know, it truly takes a team.

And we will always remember those early years when Ed was one of the original organizers of the Sweetcorn Festival in downtown Urbana and his work with the UI Foundation board and all his efforts with the convention and visitors bureau. Or his economic seminars that always brought so many people in our community together. There were several times

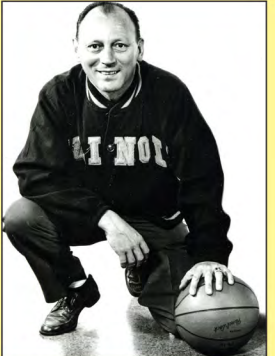
during Ed’s career that he was offered jobs in other cities, but we just couldn’t leave C-U. And it was that sense of community that grounded us there.

The community feeling in C-U is unlike any other we’ve seen. Whether it was our church community, the school community, the UI community, the community at large, and of course, the United Way community — which especially holds a special place in my heart.

With only the exception of being a mother, nothing has given me more fulfillment and joy than the time I spent at United Way. I am immensely proud of the work I did there — whether it was creating the Pillars program, or bringing people together to organize, mentoring young people or the countless hours volunteering.

The great thing about volunteering is that, in addition to helping someone else, the feeling that you get in return is indescribable. John Lewis said, “If you come together with a mission, and it’s grounded with love and a sense of community, you can make the impossible possible.”

From both Ed and I, congratulations to United Way of Champaign County on 100 years of making the impossible possible. And we send our love back to the *community* we still — and always will — consider home.



COMBES

Flashback: 1949

Always a sure-fire hit of a fundraising campaign strategy: Involve the local college basketball coach fresh off the school’s first-ever Final Four appearance. That’s what the newly renamed Champaign County Community Chest did 75 years ago, when it chose **Harry Combes** to chair the University of Illinois division. The result? A 25 percent increase in UI participation.

WHY WE GIVE: Lisa and Jason Rector



Provided

“Our family wholeheartedly supports United Way, a nonprofit that has consistently demonstrated its positive impact on our community over the past century,” says **Lisa**, the board president-elect. “We recognize the organization as a vital force addressing various needs within Champaign County.

“By aligning ourselves with United Way and becoming members of the Century Club, we are confident that our support will contribute to a lasting legacy of positive change for generations to come. We hope you will join us in supporting United Way of Champaign County.”

UNITED WAY AT 100

UBIQUITOUS BETTERMENT ACCOUNTABILITY INVIGORATING OMNIPRESENT PROFOUND TRANSFORMATIVE INSPIRING



TRISH BARKER



PAULA KAUFMAN



TOM CONRY



ERIC FREYFOGLE



DAVID SHOLEM



TIM KILLEEN



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TERRY GOODE

WHY WE GIVE

ROGER CLARK

How it started: "I think my first donation was through the Campus Charitable Fund Drive, around 1970. Which, if my memory isn't too far off, means I've been a United Way donor for half of its 100 years."

"For the first 15 or more years, donating to United Way was just my way of avoiding decisions about which local charities to give to. But I turned into a true believer when I began serving on committees helping United Way determine how and where to award its grants."

"Visiting the programs the United Way supported and evaluating their outcomes opened my eyes for the first time to the enormous impact the United Way has in making Champaign County a better place to live and do business."

Why it continues: "I continue to give to the United Way because I trust it to identify the community's greatest needs and help our local agencies meet them."

"I particularly like the way it forms creative partnerships to pull together the resources to address those needs, as they have done in bringing the Regional Planning Commission and the Housing Authority of Champaign County together to provide the much-needed Emergency Housing for Families program, and in working with Sage Farms, Parkland College and others to create the Farmers Feeding Families program."



Hello, Dolly! That's **Roger Clark** with a cardboard cutout of the inspiration behind the United Way/**Dolly Parton** Imagination Library. Provided

CARRIE EISENMENGER

How it started: "I started working with United Way over a decade ago. Sue Grey walked into my workplace and I remembered her voice from my Emerging Community Leaders program. We grabbed coffee and she shared the plan of Power of the Purse."

"I was helping Brian McClure with his sponsorships at the time and shared the opportunity with him. Through that partnership, my husband and I learned more about the work of United Way and become supporters."

Why it continues: "United Way assesses the needs of our community and constantly looks for ways to drive meaningful change. They partner with other community organizations so when we donate to the Community Impact Fund, we know we are supporting multiple community efforts."

"The Emergency Shelter for Families is one the programs I get more excited to support. There was a community need to keep families together in times of struggle and this shelter does just that. They also offer case management to support the families beyond the immediate need of shelter."

"That extra step, one United Way takes often, is the element that creates a lasting impact on people in our community. It is an honor to be a small part of that work."



CARRIE EISENMENGER

LIFE-CHANGING



CLOYDIA LARIMORE

ACTION



BARBARA HUNDLEY

TRANSFORMATIONAL



AMY SANTOS

CRUCIAL



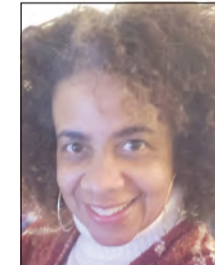
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UNITED WAY AT 100



MY UNITED WAY STORY: PAST PRESIDENT/CEO LYN JONES

'I am humbled by this generous community'

When I was hired in 2007, the United Way board made it clear that we had never been able to hit an annual goal of \$3 million. The first time we were able to announce that we made that goal was very exciting.

Later during my time there, United Way convened a community committee to address unmet health-care needs, especially the need for dental care for those unable to afford it.

The collaboration with Carle, Parkland, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance, Frances Nelson, Christie, Smile Healthy and Dr. Scott Anderson resulted in a dental clinic within Frances Nelson Health Center that has been serving

patients for almost a decade. It's great to reflect on how many people have been served because the community came together to address an unmet need. I'm proud to have been part of that.

The third and most lingering memory is the people. United Way had then and still does, a staff that is so dedicated to the mission. The United Way agency partners, those on the front line of providing direct services, have my unlimited respect. I was also so fortunate to have an absolutely stellar board of directors, who did far more than attend meetings. Their leadership had significant impact on any

success we may have had.

Finally, I am humbled by this generous community and every individual who gave of their time and treasure to help their neighbors in need.

When it was announced that I would be stepping down in 2012, The News-Gazette published an editorial that was written by John Foreman. It brought tears to my eyes and I promptly wrote a thank you and then decided to go to the Gazette and deliver it in person. Mr. Foreman was so, so gracious. I still pull it out and reread when I need a little motivation.

Forever grateful for the kind words.



The News-Gazette

That's **Lyn Jones** in 2007, just after being appointed United Way of Champaign County president and CEO.



Flashback: 1980

Milestone met: The nonprofit's 57th annual campaign surpasses \$1 million (and has been seven figures' large every year since). It's a fitting kickoff to a decade of big change, from 1985's launch of the leadership giving "Pillars" program (recognizing donors who give \$500 or more annually, like the late **Marge and George Sodemann**, left, a group that totaled 131 then and is over 1,200 now) to 1988's appointment of **James van der Klof** as executive director.



Congratulations on

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UNITED WAY AT 100



MY TURN: UNITED WAY CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER BECCA GUYETTE

From the 1920s to now, women have been at the forefront

Every donor, volunteer, staffer and community member has played an essential role in helping United Way serve this community over the past 100 years. Still, I've always been particularly moved by the women whose generosity and time have made a key impact. In our historical files, we found the names of dozens of local women who volunteered to go door-to-door fundraising for our predecessor, the Community Chest, in the 1920s and 1930s. An extensive list of women's groups and college clubs fundraised for the Home and War Chest in the 1940s and later for the United Fund in the 1950s and 1960s.

As we evolved into the United Way in 1971, women leaders are found on our board of directors and among our first staff members. Today, our Women United group has over 900 members. Looking back, it's clear that United Way and our community have always benefited greatly from women's leadership.

One such leader is longtime supporter Kathryn Luther Henderson, who passed away in 2022 at the age of 99. Kathie was raised in Champaign and attended school in a one-room schoolhouse. She began her philanthropy journey as a young child — her mother encouraged her to give pennies to her church each Sunday. She started giving to United Way in 1965 when she joined the faculty at the University of Illinois and never stopped.

Kathie believed in capitalizing on the power of compound interest. Upon her death, she left a six-figure gift to United Way. In true Kathie style, she pledged much of her gift to our endowment so that it might continue to compound and support



Kathie and Bill Henderson

Provided

our work for perpetuity.

Our Women United group is helping United Way connect with the next generation of women leaders. Their signature Power of the Purse fundraiser has generated over \$700,000 for United Way over the past nine years — funds that are supporting a family shelter and college scholarships for women.

I especially love seeing our Women United members bring their children along for our volunteer days. They're showing the next generation that they, too, can make a difference — just like Kathie's mother did so many years ago.

There are too many supporters to single out individually in this space. However, the commonality they all share is the knowledge that working and giving together makes this a brighter and better community for all.

Our community is stronger because of them.

GO FIGURE

UNITED WAY

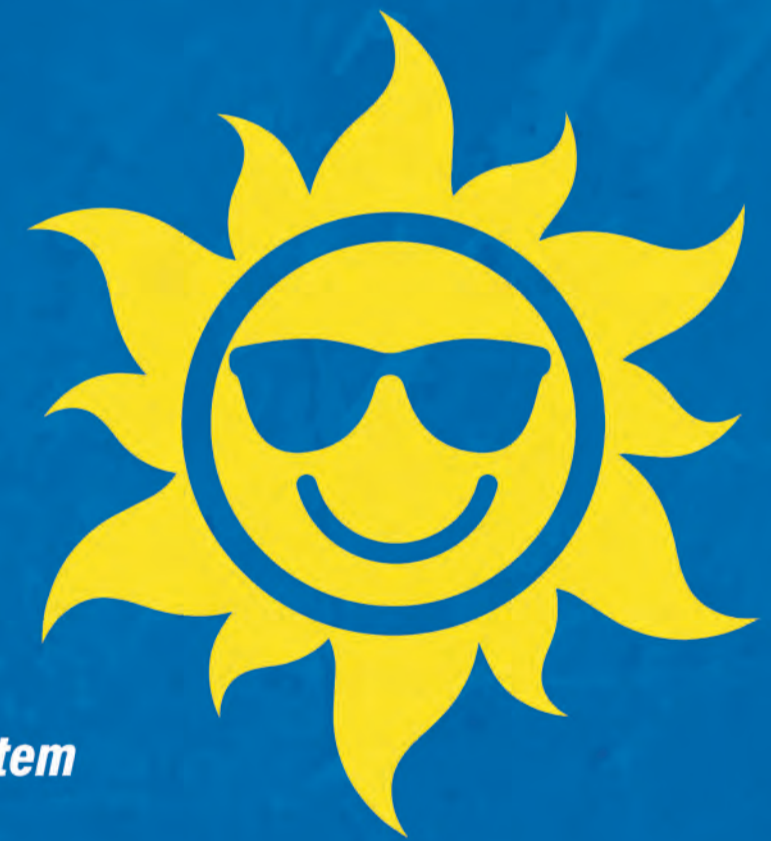
WOMEN UNITED®

- 900+** Local members of Women United who give \$500-plus annually.
- 143** Scholarships funded for women attending Parkland College through United Way's Power of the Purse celebration. Proceeds from the annual event — which will be held for a 10th time on May 2 — also go toward the Emergency Shelter for Families.
- \$700,000+** Funds raised through the Power of the Purse festivities.
- 50%** United Way of Champaign County board seats held by women.

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UNITED WAY AT 100



MY TURN: CHAMPAIGN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT/CEO LAURA WEIS

‘What’s more challenging is giving time rather than money’

Do you ever wonder why some group projects succeed and others don't? While I have no scientific data to prove my theory, I only have experience. My experience leads me to believe that successful group initiatives happen when people let their guard down and participate from a place of authenticity and with an understanding that sometimes, there are things in our universe that are bigger than one person.

Success happens when we seek a “united way” to address the challenges that go well beyond the individual.

Post-World War I, an initiative to address the most pressing community needs by creating a “community chest” was gaining momentum nationwide. Champaign and Urbana business leaders were paying attention, and the Champaign Chamber of Commerce held a public forum to engage the community’s interest in the concept.

The Urbana Chamber of Commerce leaders recognized that creating a fund to assist our most vulnerable was more significant than one chamber or the other. So collectively, setting aside any differences, the Champaign-Urbana Community Chest was formed in 1924. This chest laid the foundation for today’s United Way of Champaign County.

As early as 1924, Champaign County business leaders were invested in the health and well-being of the community. Inherently, they understood that building a strong, equitable and thriving community wasn't someone else's responsibility — it belongs to all. While there is the selfless act of doing for others (which should be reason enough), the case can be made that businesses engaged in ensuring a healthy community can also find benefit for their company. And it's all right to reap those benefits.



LAURA WEIS

When you have the means, writing a check is easy. Every not-for-profit will gladly accept the donation. But what's more challenging is giving time rather than money. It is a precious resource, and in the business world, time is money. In 2024, the workforce is skewing younger, and this workforce comes with different expectations of their employers. When talent is hard

to retain, positions are difficult to fill and turnover costs a company money, it is time to re-evaluate and listen to what this new generation of employees is saying.

Just as the community came together in 1924 to create a critical community safety net, workers today are asking employers to be purpose-driven and to make the safety net bigger to encompass today's challenges.

According to doublethe-donation.com, 71 percent of employees believe working at a company that gives back through philanthropy and volunteering is important. A staggering 96 percent of companies report that their employees who volunteer are more engaged in the workplace. This statistic alone should motivate employers to consider establishing a workplace volunteer policy or program.

If you're an employer yet to consider offering volunteer time off, now is the right time to look into it. Your company can contribute to the overall good of the community, and you may also earn the perception of being an employer of choice for many.

It's a sound business decision, and the need for volunteers in our community is great. As an employer, you'll strengthen and widen the community safety net and foster happier and healthier employees.

The Mayo Clinic suggests that volunteerism can enhance employees' well-being by improving their physical and mental health, reducing stress and decreasing the risk of general illness, meaning fewer sick days. Volunteerism also helps to build the soft skills that are so hard to teach. Through volunteerism, your employees will learn teamwork, collaboration and time management, benefiting your workplace.

Is it altruistic to create a company volunteer program where the employer benefits from happier, healthier employees, less turnover and better skills? No. But when an employee is given time and has their company's permission to help work on an issue they are passionate about — a challenge more significant than one person — a “united way” can be found by employer and employee for the benefit of everyone.



John Dixon/The News-Gazette
Doug and Linda Mills

Flashback: 1995

The first family of First Busey Corp. — **Doug and Linda Mills** — become the first members of United Way's Tocqueville Society, a distinction that goes to donors who contribute \$10,000 or more annually. These days, there are nearly 40 Tocqueville households giving to the Champaign County chapter.

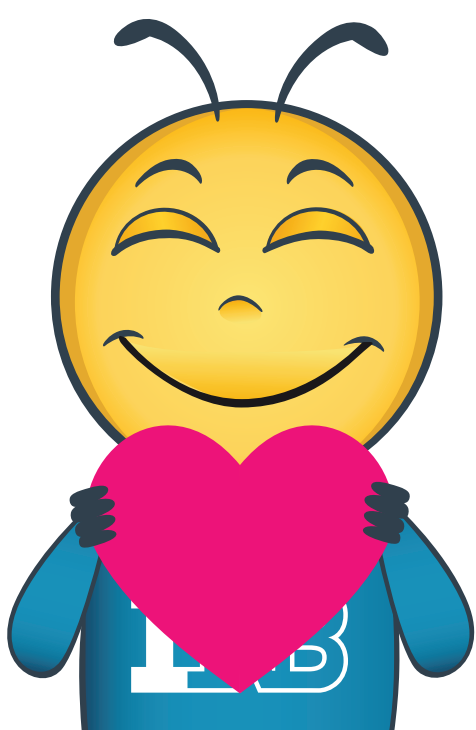


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UNITED WAY AT 100



PICTURE THIS

A look at a few of the hundreds of community leaders and memorable moments that have been a part of United Way's story this century.



ABOVE: United Way's **Nancy Suchomski** and **Tabatha Helm** sort donations during a 2012 Stuff the Bus event at Christie Clinic.



Sue Grey with **George Shapland**

Provided

RIGHT: **Tony Clements** upon stepping up as interim CEO in 2012.

The News-Gazette photos



From left, volunteers **Julie Dörner**, **Kurt Dörner**, **Nate Warman**, **Julianna Sellett**, **Sue Foster** and **Jhane Reifsteck** distribute kindergarten readiness kits door to door during 2017's Walk as One event.

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UNITED WAY AT 100



PICTURE THIS

A look at a few of the hundreds of community leaders and memorable moments that have been a part of United Way's story this century.



Two-time UI Campus Charitable Fund Drive Chair **Maureen Banks** (right) joined daughter-in-law **Kayla Banks** and granddaughter **Emery Banks** at a Women United Illini women's basketball event in 2022.



The Champaign County business community delivered a supersized check in 2022.

Photos provided

From 2012: Generations of United Way Pillars gather for a team picture.



Proud supporters **Dave Downey** and **Jane Hays**.

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UNITED WAY AT 100



WHY WE GIVE: Lynne and Dick Barnes

How it started: "I remember very clearly when we started donating," **Lynne** says. "I was a fairly new employee at Carle in 1978 and the annual United Way workplace campaign came along as usual. "I think my pay rate at that time was \$5.41 an hour and I thought that was amazing. But, Dick and I were just figuring out our finances after graduating from the U of I and I wasn't sure if we could afford to give. "However, my boss at the time, who was a great guy, was also kind of pushy — which is just what I needed. He told me what is still so true; the amount doesn't matter — what matters is the practice of giving back to your community. "And so we did and it stuck." **Why it continues:** "Having lived in Champaign-Urbana for the past 53 years, I have long known the consistent impact our United Way has had on this county. And, we have contributed almost as long too, starting soon after I began working at Carle in 1977. "Dick and I wanted to be a part of the 100-year celebration campaign in addition to routine giving, because we have seen over the decades how carefully and strategically this organization uses what is donated. Always, our United Way is focused on areas of greatest need and carefully measures outcomes to assure optimum use of the money donated. "I appreciate how careful and deliberate they are with utilizing donations. We want to be a part of seeing that this organization lasts another 100 years, as a part of our own personal legacy to C-U."



Provided
Past board President **Lynne Barnes** at United Way's 2007 campaign kickoff.



Provided
The three women who've headed up United Way of Champaign County, from left: **Tammy Lemke, Sue Grey** and **Lyn Jones**.

Flashback: 2002

A year before Villa Grove native **Tammy Lemke** becomes the first woman to be appointed executive director, United Way wraps up a multi-year restructuring and announces a new vision: creating "measurable community impact" through Community Impact Grants. Three vision councils are formed to help execute the new strategy: Birth to 6, Youth and Basic Needs.



CONGRATULATIONS,
United Way of Champaign County!

A century looks good on you.



UNITED WAY AT 100

TREMENDOUS

COMMUNITY

ESSENTIAL

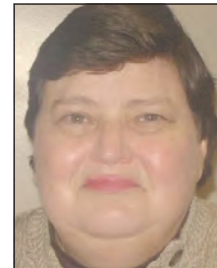
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CRAIG KIDDOO

DAN MARKER

JOHN FARNEY

DAVE BOBERG

JAN KILEY

GARY DELL

LUKE SULLIVAN

MY UNITED WAY STORY: EMMIE FISHER

'Volunteering with United Way came with personal rewards for me'



In 2013, I co-chaired the annual campaign with Mike Ross, director of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. In November of that year, the town

of Gifford was devastated by a tornado. We were in the midst of the campaign but quickly responded, coordinating with the American Red Cross to provide basic needs to Gifford.

Clean water was a vital need, and United Way held a bottled water drive with WDWS. WCIA helped United Way collect checks and cash donations.

Volunteers were mobilized to assist in the cleanup. The good-hearted people and businesses of central Illinois worked together, contributing time, money and goods for this urgent need.

Because of that emergency, it would have been easy for people who gave directly to the Gifford clean-up efforts to give less to United Way that year. Instead, major donors pledged over \$2 million to



Provided

That's our **Mike Haile** with the bottled water delivery bound for tornado-stricken Gifford in 2013.

the annual campaign for the benefit of all Champaign County.

This was a record amount and the first time the United Way Pillars donated over \$2 million.

The 30-plus years of volunteering with United Way came with personal rewards for me. I made many friends, developed professional skills and had unforgettable expe-

riences with hard-working partner agencies and with people who sometimes need a helping hand.

The common denominator for those who choose to participate with the United Way of Champaign County is to optimize conditions so individuals and families have the best opportunities to live a good life in this place we call home.

Flashback: 2005

One of the organization's proudest initiatives is born, with the mission of connecting young professionals with United Way and the local nonprofit community. In less than two decades since, 780 community members have graduated from the **Emerging Community Leaders Program**. And that wasn't the only big development of the 2000s, which also see 2005's kick-off of United Way's **Youth Volunteerism Pilot Program** (first task: a community-wide leaf-raking project, pictured above), 2006's launch of the **Workforce Volunteering Program**, 2007's appointment of **Lyn Jones** and 2007's annual campaign exceeding \$3 million for the first time.



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UNITED WAY AT 100



WHY WE GIVE: Randall and Theresa Green

How it started: "My first donation was probably in 2007 or 2008," **Randall** remembers. "Shortly after graduating law school, returning to town and beginning work at Meyer Capel, I joined United Way's Emerging Community Leaders program. "While I joined to give back to the community through volunteerism, I quickly learned the importance of giving back financially too — even in modest amounts. Through ECL, I was exposed to the tireless work that goes into the program-funding approval and was quickly assured that United Way would be an excellent steward of my donation(s)."

"While not a direct gift to the United Way, Theresa and I were recognized as 'difference makers' by the United Way the year we were married. We tied the knot in the Dominican Republic shortly after the horrific Haiti earthquakes of 2010. Since Haiti and the Dominican Republic are on the same island, we coordinated with Carle, the airline and our wedding party to deliver 18 duffle bags of medical supplies to the island."

Why it continues: "We give to the United Way for two reasons: First, because we have participated in several funding cycles as both a volunteers and a board member. That experience has given us complete confidence that the United Way will ensure that our donation is directed toward the most emergent community needs in a way that we could never do ourselves."

"Second, because the dynamic staff at the United Way always steps up to identify and meet the most critical needs in our community. Time after time, they have proven that they are able to connect those in need with the diverse resources in our community with the speed, compassion and decisiveness that few others can."

"They not only support amazing programs and organizations throughout the community, but they also don't hesitate to step up and take the lead when there is no one else to do it."



Theresa and Randall Green



Flashback: 2011

In what would become a twice-a-decade publication, United Way issues its first-ever **Community Impact Report**, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities facing the community. A year later, **Lyn Jones** retires as CEO. She's succeeded on a permanent basis by **Sue Grey**, with **Tony Clements** heading up the nonprofit on an interim basis in between.



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UNITED WAY AT 100

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EMILY DONOHOE



SCOTT RICE

FROM THE TOP: 1 question for 4 leaders

How does United Way of Champaign County stack up against other chapters?

BILL KITSON
President/CEO from 1997-2003, now director of the U.S. Central Region at United Way Worldwide

"While every United Way is as unique as the community it serves, there are measures one could use for comparisons. As I look at United Ways of similar sized communities, both in Illinois and across the nation, United Way of Champaign County is doing very well indeed.

"Whether it is the success of the annual United Way campaign or the organization's overall revenue, UWCC is in the top 10. To put this in perspective, there are about 250 United Ways of a similar size in the country. UWCC is ranked No. 10 in campaign and No. 11 in overall revenue. In Illinois, UWCC is No. 1 in both categories.

"If you look at growth over time, UWCC is one of the few United Ways in the country consistently growing and has been for over 25 years.

"Ultimately, I use a far more subjective measure to assess the strength of a United Way. When a community is facing a crisis, like a natural disaster, or a problem, like homelessness or child-success, who is asked to lead? Who does the mayor call? Who do community leaders reach out to?

"From before the time I was in Champaign County as the CEO of United Way 25 years ago to today with Sue Grey's leadership, the community has continually turned to United Way to help tackle our community's toughest problems.

"That trust is the best measure of a United Way."



KITSON

United Way has a long history of volunteer leadership. What's your hope for the continued role of volunteerism within the organization?

JEWELL WHITE
Current board chair

"My hope would be that United Way volunteers continue to stay active and excited about making positive change in our community. I am also hopeful that United Way leadership continues its efforts to diversify its volunteers and leadership to be reflective of the community it serves."



WHITE

What's one challenge facing United Way as it turns 100?

LOTT THOMAS
1977 board president

"I was president 46 years ago, and the issue we had then, which is still true today, was to determine how to involve more people in the county, in some small way, in the effort to increase funds available for the county's needs.

"During the Depression and then in World War II, people worked together to solve common problems. That continued through the 1950s, but then slowly began to erode, as people felt less inclined to join together to solve community needs.

"Unfortunately, that erosion of community involvement is still with us."



THOMAS

How about a favorite memory from your years running the show?

JAMES VAN DER KLOK
Executive director, 1988-93

"My favorite memories involve the people, including the board, staff, agency representatives, donors and community members. There was — and I expect still is — a common purpose of people coming together to make life better for all Champaign County residents.

"For that reason, we were able to accomplish a great deal in a short period of time. For example, during my tenure, we altered the way we distributed funds to be based on a defined set of community needs and provided support to programs meeting new needs such as the AIDS epidemic.

"We partnered with the unions to expand fundraising and volunteer outreach; the University of Illinois around student volunteerism; and with the cities of Champaign and Urbana and the Champaign County Mental Health Board around shared community goals.

"All of this resulted in double-digit fundraising increases and the start of the leadership giving society, as well as national recognition for our drive to help the homeless."



VAN DER KLOK

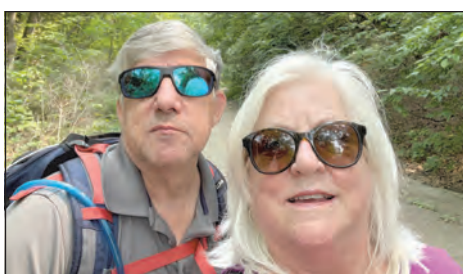
Flashback: 2013

Community members in need of services ranging from counseling to the right care for aging Mom and Dad now have a new way to request them — by dialing 2-1-1. United Way partners with the county Mental Health Board and county Developmental Disabilities Board to make the line available locally, at an annual cost of between \$25,000 to \$30,000. Later that same year, volunteers on call with United Way step up by the dozens to assist with the cleanup effort following a tornado that destroys 30 homes and does major damage to another 40 in the Champaign County village of Gifford.

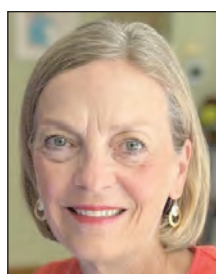
SWEEPING SERVE RESPONSIVE INSPIRING DEEP LIFE-CHANGING DIVERSE



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MIKE AND DEBBIE HIRSCHI



SARA KELLEY



MICHELLE TURNER



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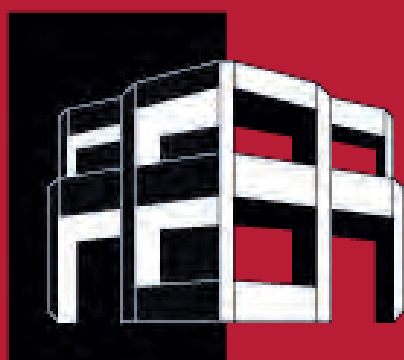
JAYA KOLISETTY



KENT CHOQUETTE

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Cheers to 100 years



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UNITED WAY AT 100



United Way, from A to Z

A is for **AWARDS**, nine of which will be handed out at United Way's 100th meeting and celebration. Roll call: the **University of Illinois**, **Pear Tree Estate/LA Gourmet Catering** and **Cindy Somers** (Spirit of Caring); **Ameren Illinois** (Million Dollar Circle); and **Champaign Multimedia Group**, **Parkland College Agricultural Technologies**, **Bob Flider**, **Scott Miller** and **Yvette Whiteley** (Difference Makers).



Provided

James Barham's business was presented with United Way's Spirit of Caring Award in 2019.

B is for **BEVERLY HILLS'** Rodeo Drive, the hoity-toity stretch of LA where **James Barham** used to go on special shopping trips once a year. "I befriended the women at Cartier. Gucci. Louis Vuitton," says the **Spirit of Caring Award**-winning owner of Champaign's **Barham Benefit Group**, who'd return from those visits with a pricey gift — the women's handbag that often fetched the most money at United Way's **Power of the Purse** gala.

C is for the 92-strong **CENTURY CLUB** — those generous souls who've given \$5,000 or more to the 100th anniversary campaign. Members include four corporate sponsors.



D is for **DOLLY PARTON**: country music icon, renowned philanthropist, National Medal of Arts recipient and inspiration behind **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**, a United Way-backed program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, no matter their family's income. Within two months of its local launch, 2,000 kids were signed up to receive books once a month.

E is for **EDWARD C. HAYES**, former head of the UI's **Department of Sociology** and one of the most vocal champions of the establishment of a single **Community Chest**, one that brought Champaign,



HAYES



Daily Illini Archives

Urbana and the UI campus together.



F is for **FARMING**, an industry worth \$426,807 in grain sales for United Way over the last decade. Thomasboro's **Pete Sage** helped take the nonprofit's food pantry contributions to another level when he began harvesting 80 acres leased at a discount by **Unit 4** and nine lent rent-free by **Litania Sports**. The **Farmers Feeding Families** program continues, with Sage handing the reins to Parkland's ag tech department last year.

G is for **GRANTS**, which play a prominent part in **Sue Grey's** two favorite days of the year: "First, when we call local groups to let them know they've been awarded a grant to help them do more great work in the community. The second is when we get the final grant reports back. The data shows United Way grants make a real difference in our neighbors' lives. It's never perfect — there's always more to do — but it is progress and change."

H is for the Champaign County **HOME AND WAR CHEST**, launched three years into World War II as a means to raise funds for both causes.

A spinoff of the local Community Chest, United Way's predecessor organization, Champaign County's Home and War Chest went on to exceed its fundraising goal every year.



Scott Bennett

I is for two beloved community members honored with **Spirit of Caring** awards **IN MEMORIAM** at United Way's past two annual meetings — Urbana children's champion **Janice Mitchell** in 2021, state Sen. **Scott Bennett** in 2022.

J is for **JELD-WEN**, one of nine members of United Way's **Million Dollar Circle of Caring**. Joining the window and patio door manufacturer with a plant in Rantoul: **Busey Bank**, **Carle Foundation Hospital**, the **University of Illinois**, **Kraft Heinz**, the **city of Champaign**, **Christie Clinic**, **Schnucks** and, as of last year, **Ameren Illinois**.

K is for **JOS. KUHN & CO.** (est. 1905), which is on the short list of Champaign businesses that have made it to 100 years. Others in the centennial club: **Busey Bank** (1868), **English Brothers** (1902) and **Sullivan-Parkhill** (1923).

Please see A TO Z, A-19



Janice Mitchell



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UNITED WAY AT 100

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JAYNE DELUCE



DANITA BROWN YOUNG



TOM RAMAGE



STU MEACHAM



LAURA HUTH-RHOADES



SARAH SANDQUIST

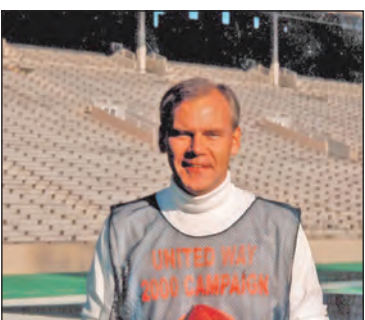


DAPHNE CLINE

A TO Z

Continued from A-18

L is for **LOCAL LABOR** unions, active partners from the beginning. Over the last 10 years, the **East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council** has sponsored United Way's **Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar**, a tool designed for kids aged 3, 4 and 5.



Provided

Steve Tock

M is for **MEMORIAL STADIUM**, where chair **Steve Tock** kicked off United Way's 2000 campaign with a kick — through the goal posts at the football home of the Illini. "I think the field goal attempt was my idea," Tock says. "Growing up, we built goal posts on a vacant lot and spent time practicing kicks. I don't remember the distance, but I assume it was a short attempt, and yes, I did kick it through the uprights."

N is for **NINE** local businesses that have offered voluntary payroll deduction programs since the 1950s, when the suggested gift was one penny for every dollar earned: **Ameren Illinois, AT&T, Carle, Christie Clinic, Herff Jones, Sullivan-Parkhill, The**

News-Gazette, Unit 4 schools and Urbana's **District 116**.

O is for **OPERATION HELPING HAND**, a 2001 initiative co-sponsored by **The News-Gazette** that engaged 500 community members in dynamic local projects during National Volunteer Week.

P is for **PILLARS**, which became the name of United Way's most generous givers in 1985, per the suggestion of **George Sodemann**, an engineer who chaired that year's campaign. **Carol Scharlau** took it from there as '86 chair, then as the staffer hired to grow the program. By 1990, there were 364 local pillars. In 2022, there were 1,007, who contributed a combined \$2.45 million, 68 percent of the annual campaign's total.

Q is for the **QUESTION** **Angela Bradley** recalls responding to in 2020, when the world had seemingly screeched to a halt over COVID-19.

It went something along the lines of: If anyone had an idea for how to help the community during these challenging times, United Way wanted to hear it.

The pastor responsible for **Stone Creek Church's** food pantry picks it up from here:

"During that time, I watched the news like everyone else and saw the long lines of parents picking up breakfast and lunch for their children at the schools. As the director of a food pantry, however, I saw those long lines a little bit differently. I wondered, 'What about the rest of the family? What about dinner?'"

"My own mother moved in with us during the pandemic, and I wondered about feeding the other family members in the household in addition to the



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

Angela Bradley founded Stone Creek Church's annual Big Give.

children. I wrote **Beverley Baker** at the United Way with this crazy idea to provide groceries and dinner for the entire family.

"Beverley and I wrote back-and-forth several times. My team put together a detailed plan of what the massive distribution could look like. That plan, and that idea was accepted. An organization was formed around the idea called **CU Better Together**. Many organizations, churches and hundreds of community members braved the fear of the virus to pack bags and distribute groceries to all of the families in Champaign Unit 4 and Urbana District 116, as well as through our own pantry.

"Along the way, we discovered that the French-speaking African and Latino communities could be even better served by providing culturally relevant food.

"When I reported this to the United Way, they were completely on board to serve these communities, as well. We held two additional and separate distributions each week. In the French-speaking African distribution, we offered goat meat and fresh milk, partnering with local **Kilgus Farms**. We also purchased things like plantains, tomatoes and rice. For the Latino community, we purchased things

Please see A TO Z, A-20



Provided

The 2022 Farmers Feeding Families crew

Flashback: 2014

Debuting in back-to-back years: United Way of Champaign County's **Farmers Feeding Families** program, on 80 leased acres of land originally purchased by Unit 4 with the hope of it one day housing the new Central High School, and **Power of the Purse**, a sold-out celebration that brings in \$26,659 in its first year.

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GREG KNOTT



JAN SEELEY

A TO Z

Continued from A-19

like cilantro, tomatoes, onions, oil, tortillas and black and pinto beans."

R is for the **ROTARY** clubs of Champaign County, which in 1998 were presented with the first Spirit of Caring Award among organizations. Thirty-two others have been duly honored since.

S is for **SHELTER**, which United Way funded 9,804 nights of for the homeless last fiscal year.

T is for **TARGET, THE ATKINS GROUP, THE DOWNEY GROUP, THOMAS MAMER, T-MOBILE WIRELESS, TRUNKLINE GAS COMPANY and TUMMELSON BRYAN & KNOX LLP**, seven of United Way's 150 workplace giving campaign partners this last round.

U is for **URBANA EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOL**, home to one of 10 interactive "Watch! Stop! Learn! Play!" **Born Learning Trails** installed by United Way around the county.

You'll also find them at Champaign's **Beardsley, Garden Hills and Johnston parks**; Mahomet's **Bridle Leash Park**; Rantoul's **Wabash and Chris Rudzinski parks**; St. Joseph's **Kolb Park**; and Savoy's **Dana Colbert Park**.

V is for above-and-beyond **VOLUNTEERS**, honored annually since 1998 with United Way Spirit of Caring awards. The chronological list: **Don Wendel, Bob Ward, Nestor Ramirez, Anna Merritt, George Sodemann, Smith and Mary Jane DeVoe, Penn and Barb Nelson, Kevin Yonce, Walt Manske, Gary and Trudy Matthews, John Van Es, Jane Hays, Mark Ballard, Todd Petersen, Emmie Fisher, Roger Clark, Chad Barringer, Sarah Zehr, Curt Anderson, Kim and Denise Martin, Pete Sage and Sage Farms, Lynne Barnes, Darcy Sementi, Jim Turpin, David and Susan Eades, Steve Tock, Janice Mitchell, Scott Bennett and Cindy Somers.**

W is for **WICD-TV**, long-time employer of one of United Way's unsung heroes, as far as 1982 campaign chair **Ron Kiddoo** is concerned. In addition to predicting the next day's weather and teaching



Keith Page, left, and Doug Quick

drama at Centennial, the late, great **Keith Page** would film a mini-movie each year, highlighting all the good United Way was doing and helping the fundraising cause. "Very professionally done. He'd spend hours on it," Kiddoo says. "When Keith died, the project died."

Kiddoo's other couldn't-have-done-it-without-him figure from that era was then-Executive

Director **Dave Lawrence**, who presided over "a really small staff back then. He was it, really."

"They both did a lot for the United Way."

X is for the **X-FACTOR** that makes United Way worth supporting year after year, to Champaign's **Whippos**. Says **Chris**: "My husband **Dave** and I really appreciate the

fact that there is a knowledgeable group of people deciding where the support should be given.

"There are so many wonderful and worthy organizations and it is impossible to stay current on their needs. Most of these agencies are dependent on unstable funding sources and the whims of the government. The needs of the agencies also vary (by) year. Knowing that someone is taking the time to thoughtfully evaluate all of these things makes us feel very good about giving to United Way. The fact that the programs are local is very appealing."

Y is for the **STEPHENS FAMILY YMCA**, which has been both a United Way aid recipient (a **Victory over Violence** grant helped launch "**Y on the Fly**") and collaborator (part of the consortium behind **CU Better Together**, providing food to families with student children while schools went remote during the pandemic).

Z is for **ZILCH**, the number of similarly-sized United Way chapters in Illinois with campaigns that have raised more than Champaign County's. So says UWCC CEO-turned-Central Region Director **Bill Kitson** (for more, flip back page A-17).

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WELCOME TO THE CENTURY CLUB

100

Sullivan-Parkhill congratulates our friends at the United Way of Champaign County on your hundredth anniversary. The impact you've had on our community, and the support United Way provides year in and year out, make a difference to everyone who calls Champaign County home.

As the journey begins on your next hundred years, we're excited where the road will take you. After all, we're in this together.

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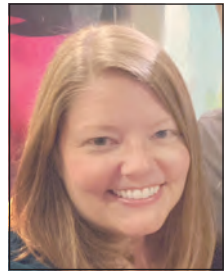
JAN BUERKETT



SALLY AND GEORGE CZAPAR



DIANA SARABI



LYNNSEY BROWNFIELD

WHY WE GIVE

DENISE AND KIM MARTIN

How it started: "When I was first out of college working at a public accounting firm in the Chicago suburbs, the managing partner was chairing the United Way campaign that year," **Denise** says. "He placed a pledge card on my desk and told me to pledge. I had no idea what United Way was but it was more of an order than an ask so I did what I was told. Needless to say, not an ideal approach."

Why it continues: "I continued giving because I observed the great work that United Way does. What stands out the most is their ability to pull people and organizations together to collectively solve a community problem. I am old and I have seen this often over the years, from an affordable daycare crisis and lack of homeless shelters to the pandemic."



Kim and Denise Martin

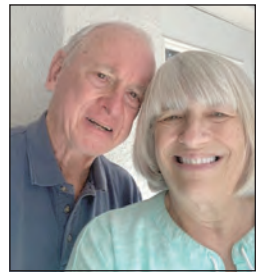
JOAN AND WALT TOUSEY

How it started: "Both of us worked at the University of Illinois," says **Joan** — her from 1994 to 2018, Walt from 1968 to 2000 — "and we would therefore have had an opportunity to give through the workplace program."

Why it continues: "When we married in 2000, we reviewed our past charitable donations as individuals — or with previous spouses — and then discussed our joint interests. We found that the programs funded by the United Way successfully address many of the social services we both feel are important for Champaign-Urbana."

"Walt also served on a review committee for a specific funding area for a few years under Bev Baker's tutelage and had firsthand knowledge of the high level of professionalism which we have continued to find in our interactions with many of the current and past staff members."

"Because we feel there are critical financial needs in the areas funded by United Way programs, we have made United Way a high priority in our annual and long term charitable planning."



Walt and Joan Tousey

Flashback: 2017



Emerging Community Leaders members install the first local **Born Learning Trail** at Savoy's Dana Colbert Park, among 750 nationwide. "It's been something we've wanted to do for some time," **Sue Grey** says of the space, an opportunity for parents and kids to get out and walk in a park together, have fun and engage with green space and learning activities. The Champaign County chapter later sets — and reaches — a goal of installing 10 such trails by 2024, part of United Way's first national public engagement campaign.

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UNITED WAY AT 100

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DAVE DONSBACH

MY TURN: CHAMPAIGN COUNTY AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MATT KELLY

‘A commitment to making our communities stronger’



This year marks a century since the Champaign and Urbana Chambers of Commerce formed what is known today as the United Way of Champaign County.

And for 82 of those years, the Champaign County AFL-CIO has been an unwavering partner, supporting the United Way’s mission in a variety of ways.

Our thousands of union members are local teachers, firefighters, government employees and trades workers who not only volunteer their time to the United Way’s cause, but since 1959, have also prioritized financial support for them, approving donations to come directly from their paychecks, ensuring the United Way has the funds it needs to serve those in our community who need it most.

Our union members also take part in fundraising events — including an annual golf outing in partnership with the East Central Illinois

Building and Construction Trades Council. Each year, that event raises around \$13,000 with the money used to fund the popular “Getting Ready for Kindergarten” calendar that is distributed to thousands of young families. Since its inception, more than 84,000 calendars have been distributed as a result of that event.

The AFL-CIO also supports the United Way’s 211 Help Line, providing informational cards free of charge and inviting leaders to talk to our union members about a service that is so important to families in crisis.

Our partnership is so strong, the United Way has even dedicated spots on their board of directors for our members, an arrangement that has existed for decades.

So why do we do it?

What does a group of unions have to do with the work done by the United Way?

Well, everything.

We share a commitment to making our communities stronger. The United Way’s focus on improv-

ing education, health and financial stability in Champaign County aligns with our efforts to ensure the world’s best training, put the area’s very best workers in safe workplaces and fight so our members earn the best wages and benefits in the area.

These things are the bedrock of a community. Something as simple as looking out for each other is something that many take for granted, but it helps make our corner of the world a better place.

We may do it in different ways, but the United Way and the AFL-CIO both firmly believe in those principles and do all that we can to make them accessible to everyone. They are the things worth volunteering for, investing in and supporting.

We are proud to stand with the United Way as they mark 100 years of serving our community. And our members will undoubtedly be standing by their side in another 100 years, as they continue that important work.



Flashback: 2020

As part of a tag-team effort done in conjunction with the **Community Foundation of East Central Illinois**, the nonprofit helps raise \$2 million for a **COVID-19 relief fund**, with \$1,137,630 of it coming from United Way grants, 559 individual donors and 43 organizations. The money is dispersed to community partners in eight waves: housing assistance; home learning supplies; food, housing and financial assistance; access to technology; communities with high COVID-19 burdens; summer food and essentials; reopening supplies; and education.

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UNITED WAY AT 100



WHY WE GIVE

WYNNE KORR

How it started: "My first donation was to the Red Feather, a similar organization, when I was in elementary school in Allentown, Pennsylvania. My family, my synagogue and later my professional education, helped me understand the need to support those in need and to do it in the most playful way possible. In every city where I was employed — Chicago, Pittsburgh and Champaign-Urbana — I volunteered with United Way and contributed financially."

Why it continues: "I give to United Way of Champaign County because: they assess the needs in our community and direct funds to address those needs; they engage citizens in the process of directing funds; and they monitor the outcomes and impact of the funds given to community groups to address needs."

"As a donor, even as well-informed as I am as a retired social work educator and researcher, I could not do that myself with each organization I might consider supporting."

"May our community continue to benefit from their work for many years into the future."



WYNNE KORR

DAVE HOOD

How it started: "My first donation to United Way was through a workplace campaign at Filbey, Summers, Abolt, Good and Kiddoo, CPAs in 1980. This was my first job after graduating from U of I. They encouraged giving 1 percent of our compensation to United Way."

"Later in my career at Martin Hood CPAs, I was a member of the campaign cabinet for United Way and worked with small businesses to encourage them to participate in the annual campaign. I had opportunities over the years to participate in the panels that helped evaluate how the United Way allocated grants to local agencies, but I declined to participate due to a potential conflict of interest since several of the UW agencies were firm clients."

"I have also served on boards of local non-profit organizations receiving the funds. The view from that side of the table was great because it highlighted how the funds were targeted to specific programs serving those in need in our community."

Why it continues: "This community has been fantastic to my family. Giving to United Way is one way that I can give back to the community that has supported my family and my business."

"United Way does the heavy lifting by allocating the money to where it is needed most. The needs in our community continue to evolve, but I continue to contribute to United Way with the confidence that my gifts are being used to create the most impact in the highest areas of need."



DAVE HOOD




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UNITED WAY AT 100



MY TURN: RETIRED FUNDRAISING PROFESSIONAL AND FORMER UNITED WAY STAFF MEMBER ELLEN SCHMIDT

‘Oh, the stories that we can all tell’

They say the best ideas come from a team of people. That's what the Power of the Purse

is. An idea. Our management team consisted of Lyn Jones as our CEO, Sue Grey as VP of community impact, Cathy Baird as VP of finance and myself as VP of community investment. We had many conversations about it, the existence of it, but not the power or the resources to execute it.

Fast forward to 2015. What started out as an idea in our management team meeting came full circle when the Power of the Purse began its journey. The answer was a volunteer committee that helped to make a dream come true.

Oh, the stories that we can all tell. I'm sure everyone in that room has a story over the past 10 years.

But I have to laugh about the time I was bidding on the “chicken” purse. It was just that. A rubber chicken purse containing a \$50 gift certificate to Watson's Shack & Rail. I was bidding to get the gift certificate. Anyway, I didn't know at the time that my friend Denise Martin was bidding on the same purse.

Well, fast forward to the end of the event and neither one of us got it. Turns out that there were three or four others trying to get that purse. It ended up with the purse going for over \$400. Ashley, my guest, felt so bad about it, she bought an identical “chicken” purse for me when she found out I didn't win. It cost about \$40, and I donated it back to the auction the following year. That is the Power of the Purse.

But it's all for a worthy cause. In my past role as executive director at the Parkland Foundation, Sue contacted me with the idea of supporting scholarships for women. Over the past nine years, United Way made the difference in the lives of 143 women by offering \$175,000 in scholarships.

The proceeds for the event also fund the Emergency Shelter for Families in Champaign. Prior to Power of the Purse, emergency shelter

Good cause, great bags

Scenes from Power of the Purse, which in nine years has become a mark-your-calendars fundraiser for women throughout Champaign County:



Photos provided



for families was an unmet need in Champaign County. Since its opening, a year after this event began, over 400 families have been provided apartment-style housing with case management support and have transitioned into stable housing. We are grateful to have played a part in changing the lives of so many individuals, and set them on a more secure path.

We couldn't do it without our sponsors. Northwestern Mutual of Central Illinois has been there for us from Day 1 as our presenting sponsor. Many

more companies joined in year two and they remain supportive today.

In our first year, we raised \$26,000 and since then we have netted over \$700,000 in total revenue. This year marks our 10th year, and the event is still going strong with about 425 women attending.

This event is the one that I look forward to every year — from donating purses, raising money and building awareness. The Power of the Purse is the fellowship of all those women who are in that room — making a difference in the lives of others.



Champaign Unit 4 School District Salutes United Way of Champaign County on its 100th Anniversary!

Congratulations on this significant milestone!
We are grateful for a strong partnership that has benefited thousands of youth and families in our community. We look forward to working together for the next 100 years!

*Dr. Shelia E. Boozer
 Superintendent*



UNITED WAY AT 100

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MY TURN: FIRST BUSEY CORP. EXECUTIVE VP AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AMY RANDOLPH

'Creating lasting change right here at home'

Together, Busey and the United Way share a unique and longstanding history firmly rooted in Champaign County.

Busey opened its doors in 1868 in Urbana. Offering the community more than a bank, our founders enabled their neighbors to grow businesses, build homes and start families. More than 155 years later, this same local passion and promise to serve remains.

Similarly, United Way has supported this community since 1924. For a century, it has exemplified the power of unity and generosity in creating lasting change right here at home.

Our time-tested, unrivaled culture of community development at Busey is reflected in our partnership with United Way and it has been since United Way's inception. Our collaborative relationship with the United Way

spans decades and has proven time and again that organizations with progressive leadership and a commitment to positive impact can collectively do great things to make our community a terrific place for everyone to live and work.

A perfect example of this is the participation of both organizations in the local Investment for Impact initiative that provides \$300,000 towards Victory over Violence grants to address immediate solutions to violent crime in our community, as well as long-term solutions to remedy the underlying factors and patterns that lead to future violent behavior.

Joining Busey and the United Way in the initiative are Carle Health, Christie Clinic, OSF HealthCare and the University of Illinois, all leaders in the Champaign-Urbana

business community committed to service, making a difference and positive local impact. This type of collaboration and commitment stands the test of time, and we are proud to join United Way and other community leaders in these and various other efforts.

Preserving the vitality of Champaign County and our surrounding communities has been, and always will be, a focus for Busey. This creed is shared by the United Way as they pursue ambitious fundraising goals, empower large-scale initiatives and enable positive change with local organizations, families and individuals.

As a decades-long partner, we congratulate United Way on a century of service to our community, thank them for their stewardship and leadership, and look forward to future collective endeavors.



AMY RANDOLPH

INCLUSIVE



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LORRIE PEARSON

LEADER



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REBECCA GINSBURG

Congratulations!

The News-Gazette is very proud to have the opportunity to partner with United Way of Champaign County to support and celebrate your 100th anniversary.

The impact you have had on our community has helped to enrich our lives and has created positive change for all of us.

The News-Gazette[®]

A Century of COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Celebrating 100 years of dedication and impact, we at BankChampaign applaud the United Way of Champaign County for their monumental contributions to our community.

Here's to continuing the legacy of positive change and empowerment. Congratulations, UW/CC!

BC BankChampaign^{N.A.}

UNITED WAY AT 100



Employer campaigns: The dandy dozen

All told, 150 local businesses held a United Way Workplace Giving Campaign in 2022. With 2023's numbers not final until June, here's a look at 12 organizations whose employees, combined with corporate support, gave the most the year prior:

1. University of Illinois
Between Campus Charitable Fund Drive contributors and retirees, no organization has as many total supporters as the winner of this year's Spirit of Caring award for large organizations.



2. Carle Health
The health-care giant is among the Champaign County organizations that had a workplace campaign in place all the way back in the 1950s.



3. Busey
It's more than money — associates who volunteer are encouraged to share their stories through Busey's "Why I Give" campaign.



4. City of Champaign
Joined United Way's Million Dollar Circle of Caring club in 2017, when employees' cumulative pledges topped \$1 million.



5. Ameren Illinois
The newest local Million Dollar Circle of Caring member, Ameren employees across Illinois and Missouri pony up more than \$1.5 million annually.



6. Caterpillar Logistics Services
Every dollar an employee donates, Caterpillar matches it. United Way has been a corporate partner for 70-plus years.



7. Schnucks
Powered by its large number of \$1-per-paycheck supporters, the grocer joined the Million Dollar Circle of Caring last year.



8. Cozad Asset Management
A recent entry to United Way's local top 12, giving back "is a legacy we're proud to be a part of," the financial services company says.



9. M | H
The Champaign accounting firm formerly known as Martin Hood holds the distinction of having the best participation rate of all campaigns.



10. Bank Champaign
A United Way partner every year since its 1990 founding, several bank employees have served as board members over the years.



Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County is extremely proud to celebrate 100 years of United Way of Champaign! Here's to 100 more!

11. Parkland College
Another recent entry to the top 12, Parkland also partners with United Way on its Farmers Feeding Families program.



12. Christie Clinic
A Million Dollar Circle of Caring member since 2017, Christie's payroll deduction campaign dates back to the 1950s.



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1924 - 2024

United Way & Family Service

A CENTURY OF CARING IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

United Way of Champaign County

Family Service
Enriching lives across the generations

United Way, (formerly Community Chest Association) and Family Service (nee Family Welfare Society) were both part of the local Social Service Center in the 1930's when this delightful young man and his dog were regular visitors.

Together, with support from the Women's Jr. League Society, we hosted the first well-baby clinics in the county beginning in the 1940's baby boom and continuing for 25 years.

Living United and serving together in the 1950's and 60's. Helen Harlan, Family Service Executive Director, hands toys to University of Illinois students to deliver at the holidays.

Family Service staff dancing to the music of the band behind them in a 1970's parade proudly sport a banner sharing our relationship with United Way.

Since 1972, United Way has supported our services for seniors including:

Friendly Caller

HomeCare

Meals on Wheels

Counseling & Advocacy

Senior Transportation

Caregiver Support

Thanks for a century of care United Way!

DON MOYER BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

THANK YOU, UNITED WAY OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

for a **century** of lifting, supporting, and **UNITING** our community!

DMBGC is honored to work and partner with the United Way of Champaign County to positively impact our community, give all kids a strong start, and create great futures for youth.

UNITED WAY AT 100

WARRIORS INTERCULTURALITY GRATITUDE YOUTH INTERCONNECTED TRUSTED UPLIFTING CONNECTIONS



JOAN DYKSTRA **PATRICIA AVERY** **MARY TIEFENBRUNN** **JAMES QUISENBERRY** **RICK MANNER** **CLIFF HASTINGS** **LANCE DIXON** **BARB LINDER**

Workplace Campaigns: Giving with a twist

Their employees chip in out of the goodness of their hearts, of course. But local employers have added perks and pizzaz to their annual United Way workplace giving campaigns, leading to friendly competitions and companywide celebrations.

1. The coveted reserved parking spot at Carle.

"By far the most popular of the creative tactics to encourage team members to participate in the United Way giving campaign," says **Kayla Banks**, the lead sponsor of Carle's employee campaign before moving into the interim chancellor's role at Carle Health's Methodist College in Peoria.

"The competition is always fierce for that auction item, one of the few reasons to be thankful for central Illinois weather," she says. But "truthfully, the biggest motivator to give for Carle Health team members is sharing in the great work done by United Way of Champaign County, and how closely their mission aligns with Carle's own organizational values and vision for the communities we serve."



Provided

They don't just give money on campus. Here in August, members of United Way's Emerging Community Leaders @ Illinois gather around Alma with some of their diaper drive donations. United Way's Bottom Line Diaper Bank distributes over 12,000 diapers a month to low-income families in Champaign County.

2. Halloween festivities at Parkland.

"Our campaign happens each year in the fall and kicks off with all the fall favorites — apple cider, donuts, pumpkin spice and a Hal-

loween office decorating contest," says **Krystal Garrett**, executive assistant to the president of the board of trustees, who'll never tire of experiencing "the spirit and joy (the campaign) brings throughout campus."



GARRETT

"Leading up to the event, departments are encouraged to decorate their areas. Employees vote and the winning department is gifted a pizza party, which is announced at the kickoff event."

"One momentous occasion stood out, when an employee came up before the winner was announced and stated that if their department won, they wished to pay it forward to another department. When I say that giving is best as a team, this is what I mean. To support the better cause through love, gifts from the heart and good-natured fun."

3. Pay for volunteering at Busey Bank.

As part of its effort to encourage associates to take part in "strengthening the places we call home," Executive VP and Champaign

Market President **Mark Wisniewski** says, "all full-time associates are provided monthly paid time off to volunteer."

Adds Wisniewski, also a United Way board member: "Busey has cultivated a culture of servant leadership by encouraging associates to give back to those causes that resonate with them — be it through time, talent or treasure."

If they choose the latter, they have dozens of options, Wisniewski says: "making an e-pledge, participating in jeans days, purchasing items through a silent auction, a gratitude gram for a fellow associate or coffee for a cause, attending fundraising events or volunteering with their department — with all funds going directly to the United Way. Whether it's a \$5 jeans day donation or associates achieving Pillar donor status, there's something for everyone."

4. Chili cook-offs at Ameren Illinois.

"Co-workers think outside of the box when they host their pledge rallies," with derby days and raffles for event tickets, among the other fun fundraisers, says **D-Lori Newsome-Pitts**, senior manager

of philanthropy and community relations.

When it comes to giving season, company leaders always go first, making their pledges during the campaign's "quiet phase," Newsome-Pitts says. "They are not only asking co-workers to give to the United Way; they are modeling that behavior."



NEWSOME-PITTS

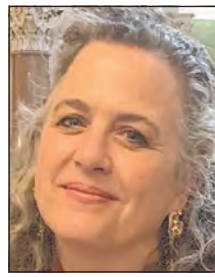
5. Goodies for givers at the Champaign Public Library.

"We encourage participation through treat bags and raffle drawings for staff who choose to donate," says the library's **Jennifer Bouvet**, part of a city staff effort that ended with \$96,225 raised for local, state and national nonprofits for 2024.

The library's approach "creates an excitement which builds throughout the giving campaign," Bouvet says.

"We are thankful to be part of the city of Champaign's United Way Combined Charities campaign each year. Together, we enhance our community."

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CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF IMPACT

Busey is proud to honor the lasting impact of the Champaign County United Way, a milestone that's transformed countless lives and created measurable change throughout our great community.

Thank you, United Way Team and generous donors, for your leadership and commitment, ensuring positive progress and change for those who need it most.

Together, we live united for a stronger tomorrow.

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