

## What is the United Way?

While most people have heard of the United Way, they may not be so aware of how its operations benefit so many people in our community. Here is how it works:

### Advancing the Common Good

Most simply, the role of the United Way is to advance the common good through maximum community impact, doing so with a staff of four plus 100 volunteers:

- The United Way of Mercer County continually monitors changing community conditions while annually conducting the county's largest fundraising to provide for the neediest among us.
- Having just merged with the Northern Mercer County United Way, this larger organization assists people through funding to over 40 programs administered by over 30 social service agencies.
- This year the United Way of Mercer County looks to raise well over \$1 million, every cent of which will stay in this county, and over 95% of which will directly benefit needy people in the county.

### Living United

With its new “**Live United**” theme, advancing the common good is less about helping one person at a time and more about working within and changing systems to help all of us on an ongoing basis. To do this, The United Way focuses on three essential building blocks for quality of life:

- Education is essential to getting and keeping a job with a livable wage and health benefits.
- Income that is adequate to pay for today's necessities and save for the future provides families with a path to financial stability.
- Health, enabled by access to quality healthcare, keeps children on track in school and adults productive at work.

Since removing any one of these three building blocks threatens the other two, the United Way of Mercer County continually monitors conditions and focuses its resources through programs and its member agencies to advance the common good.

### Volunteering

The backbone of the United Way is its many volunteers who advance the common good in one or more of three ways:

- **Giving** by making financial contributions, typically through payroll deduction every month;
- **Volunteering** their time in many ways to enable the system to work and to minimize expenses in the process; some help to raise money during the annual campaign, others work on budget panels determining how the contributions will be allocated, while others work to identify community needs and monitor quality control;
- **Advocating** the “Live United” theme and supporting the United Way initiatives, programs and the overall philosophy of raising the quality of life in our community.

Thus, with a small staff supplemented by an army of volunteers, the United Way is a group of local citizens committed to making Mercer County a great place to live and work for everyone. By **Living United**, we work to maximize the benefits of our social service system and agencies for everyone's benefit.

## How Much Should I Contribute to the United Way?

The only way the United Way of Mercer County can raise over \$1 million every year to help the neediest in the county to maintain or achieve a decent quality of life is through the generosity of thousands of contributors. Not only does United Way ask people annually to make a financial sacrifice for the less fortunate among us, but it also thanks all contributors for their wonderful generosity.

### How much should I give?

If you are wondering whether your contribution is appropriate, United Way has employed for over 40 years a giving guideline of .6% of income, which equals a gift of one hour of work per month. For example, if you have an annual income of \$50,000, then .6% equals an annual gift of \$300 or \$25 per month.

### How do I do it?

The easiest way to give is through payroll deduction. To compute your suggested monthly gift, simply take your annual income, multiply it by .6% and then divide the total by twelve. If you are paid twice a month, one half of that amount would be the suggested deduction from each paycheck.

### Should I follow up?

As your income rises and your ability to give increases, the suggested giving level increases accordingly. United Way suggests that as income increases toward \$100,000, the suggested level of giving increases from .6% toward 1%. Based on this formula, for an income of \$100,000, the suggested gift would be \$1,000 or \$83 per month.

### What is too small?

United Way of Mercer County appreciates every gift of every size, and we clearly recognize that many of you who are making annual gifts below the suggested levels are doing your best. To all of you, we express our sincerest appreciation and ask that you continue to be generous.

### One-stop Shopping

People are sometimes puzzled when being solicited by many different charities. Remember that your single gift to United Way supports over 40 different programs and 30 of the most important social service agencies throughout Mercer County. Thus, through your single gift, you are providing the broadest possible support to the neediest programs in the country.

### You can help.

We have found most people to be willing to give when they recognize a good cause that is helping genuinely needy people right here in Mercer County. We appreciate every gift, and we encourage everyone to give their fair share. Contributing regularly through payroll deduction is the easiest and most effective way to be generous.

### Make the pledge.

Making a pledge to the United Way is quick and easy and can be done either online or through a simple call to the United Way at 724-981-1884. Thanks to YOU, it works for ALL of us, the UNITED WAY!

## How the United Way Fits Today's Lifestyles

### The Good Old Days

Many of us in Mercer County and elsewhere remember the Ozzie and Harriet days when there were many stay-at-home moms, fewer single heads of households, grandparents living with the family, and a booming industrial economy with several large corporations located in Mercer County. We thought those golden days would never end—but they did!

### The New Lifestyle

Our economic base and, as a result, our lifestyles have changed dramatically since those days, and the American dream of parents with two children living in their own home simply is not there for many in our community. Today in Mercer County we often find:

- People living busier lives and working more than the traditional forty-hour work week.
- Both spouses working full time or part time outside the home.
- Many households headed by a single adult.
- People living longer but less often in the home of other family members.
- A continually changing economic base that leads to unemployment or a decline in income.
- A health care system that frequently leaves people with inadequate coverage and in need of guidance.
- Significant school dropout rates leaving many without the skills required to be productive in today's technology-based economy.
- Children starting kindergarten without the basic knowledge and life skills required for educational success.

This leaves many people facing major challenges in the basic areas of income, health and education, and in need of a much stronger social service system to fill in the gaps traditionally provided for by the traditional family structure. These, then, are the social conditions that make it essential that Mercer County have an active United Way operation that provides assistance for those in need of basic human services.

### Live United

With its "Live United" theme of advancing the common good through focus on income, health and education, the United Way of Mercer County is ideally suited to help the neediest by providing financial support to over 40 social service programs and over 30 local agencies. The United Way enables people to survive, and in many cases thrive, in today's world that for many is so different from the world of *Ozzie and Harriet*. For individuals or families experiencing physical or mental health deficiencies, job loss, unemployment, underemployment and related economic pressures, underachievement in school, truancy, youth violence and the many health-related challenges of the elderly, the United Way and its member agencies are a lifeline.

### United Way Provides the Foundation

In today's world, the United Way of Mercer County is the bedrock of our support system to help those in need. All funds contributed to the United Way stay in Mercer County and 95% of all contributions go directly to programs to help the needy. This is how and why the United Way of Mercer County "Lives United" to advance the common good.