

## **1. Who am I helping when I give to the United Way's Community Fund?**

You are helping strengthen the entire community. Money raised locally is spent locally on a variety of programs, initiatives and collaborations that target the unique human care needs of people from all over Dutchess and Orange Counties. United Way community investors and volunteers help their neighbors support a wide variety of programs and services, focused in the areas of Education, Income and Health.

Specifically, our goals are to help people meet their basic needs following a disaster or personal crisis, to help children and youth achieve their potential through education, to help individuals and families become financially stable and independent, and to improve people's health.

## **2. Why is it better to give to the United Way Community Fund rather than directly donating to one organization?**

When you give to the Community Fund you support lasting change by addressing the underlying causes of problems. You help support programs, initiatives and collaborations that United Way knows are achieving measurable results in addressing the toughest issues in our community. We can provide comprehensive solutions in a way that a single organization can't do alone.

## **3. What is the role of United Way in our community?**

United Way advances the common good. We mobilize resources – funds, expertise, volunteers, collaborations and public concern – and target those resources to achieve measurable benefits in our community. United Way, convenes leaders from non-profit organizations, businesses, education and government, conducts research, and helps develop an action plan so that many different groups can focus their resources on working together to address the priorities of the community most effectively.

## **4. Does United Way provide services directly to the community?**

We do not. Hudson Valley Region 2-1-1 and all of our partners and projects do provide direct services. Projects such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the partnership to screen young children for developmental issues are closely associated with United Way but involve multiple partners.

## **5. Who decides which issues United Way will address and which programs or projects are funded?**

Volunteers from the community work at every stage, from learning about the community's aspirations to convening issue experts and coalitions to shaping an action plan to address the most pressing issues. The United Way Board of Governors relies on data and input from the community to determine which issues we can best address. The Board has the ultimate vote on all funding decision and actions plans.

## **6. What is the change United Way made to how it funds programs and projects?**

In the past, United Way funded programs based on a traditional, historic relationship with an organization or program - these were called "Member Agencies". Today, we fund programs and projects that support United Way's goals to promote Education, Income, and Health for everyone. Any 501 (c)3 non-profit organization is eligible to apply for funding. We also support many other community programs that arise through collaborations that also help further these goals. They are listed on the back page of your pledge card.

## **7. How does a program or a project apply to receive funding?**

United Way will continue to issue broad Requests for Proposals (RFP) and narrower invitations to apply when funds are available. Broad Request for Proposals are used to as part of our Action Plans. Invitations are used when the appropriate partner has already been identified in the Action Plan or when just a small number of potential partners are qualified to carry out the work. Organizations should make sure their information is in the Hudson Valley Region 2-1-1 database in order to receive mailings regarding available funds. Opportunities may also be announced on our website at [www.uwoc.org/community-organizations/](http://www.uwoc.org/community-organizations/)

## **8. What are the qualifications to receive funding?**

Your local United Way funds specific programs or projects, and does not provide “blanket funding” to organizations. Among the many outcomes required by United Way, our volunteers rate funding requests according to the program’s ability to:

- Provide a needed service in one of the three impact areas (education, income or health) consistent with the action plans and the specific RFP or invitation to apply under which they are seeking funding;
- Have a positive, measurable impact on our community;
- Provide an annual audit and manage budget responsibly, and;
- Operate as one of the most effective and efficient programs in our community.

Volunteers weigh these and other factors. They may then choose to make one-time grants -- sometimes providing start-up funds -- or multi-year grants that allow a program to develop over time.

## **9. Are services supported by United Way free for the person who needs them?**

It depends on the service and the person in need. A few of the programs have fees, but are provided on a sliding-fee scale to those in need based on an individual’s ability to pay. Others, such as grocery distribution to the needy, are provided free to those who qualify. Still others are available to all, regardless of economic status.

## **11. What does United Way do to assure organizations that receive funding are doing a good job?**

Each program or project selected for funding must sign an agreement and submit Outcome Reports that measure the impact they are having on clients or community conditions. Financial and other reports are required as well. We review these reports, communicate with the organization, perform site visits then confer with volunteers when there appears to be an issue. We look at issues on a case-by-case basis recognizing that all organizations go through struggles from time to time. Our first step is to offer technical assistance and in rare cases when a program or project cannot meet our requirements we have put in place additional guidelines, reduced the grant or stopped it altogether.

## **12. What does United Way do with my money?**

99% of the money raised here in Dutchess and Orange Counties is invested locally to help people who live in our community. While some grants may be supplied to organizations outside of our counties, (ex: Hudson Valley Region 2-1-1,) they are funding projects at work right here in Dutchess and Orange Counties. Last year, through United Way funded programs, donations helped local people cope and resolve crises associated with unemployment, illness, domestic violence, child abuse, accessing medical care and prescriptions, and other everyday crises. In addition we help parents be better prepared to help their children thrive and for individuals to increase their financial stability.

### **13. Is my money managed soundly when I give it to United Way?**

United Way is recognized as a model of a cost-efficient fund raising organization that is responsive to community needs. Our financial records are open to the public, and hundreds of experienced volunteers solicit, distribute, and account for the money raised. In addition, United Way expenditures are reviewed and approved by a volunteer Finance and Audit Committee, Planning Committee and, ultimately, the local Board of Governors. United Way also pursues sponsorships of events, advertising, publications and other items in order to direct more dollars to community programs. All organizations that receive funding from United Way are also required to submit appropriate financial documents to exhibit financial stability.

### **14. What if United Way doesn't fund my favorite organization?**

If you wish to support a specific organization that is not currently funded by United Way, you may designate your gift to any tax-exempt non-profit organization of your choice using our Donor Choice form. We believe we have "done our homework" in making the decisions and investments we have made and we wish every donor would support the Community Fund with at least a portion of their gift. Please note that there is an administrative handling fee for designated gifts.

### **15. What is an "uncollectible?"**

When donors leave their place of employment, before their entire annual pledge has been contributed, the shortfall is known as "uncollectible". Therefore, with the exception of fully paid donations (not payroll deduction), a small percentage(5%) based on these uncollected pledges is deducted from designations made to organizations other than United Way.

### **16. I don't think that a service supported by United Way has ever helped my family or me. Why should I give to the Community Fund?**

Although you or your loved ones may not have used a service supported by United Way, chances are that a coworker or friend has benefited from one of these services or even been indirectly affected by one. Check the list on the back of your pledge card to see a complete list of our funded partners. More than 211,700 people have called United Way's Hudson Valley Region 2-1-1 for assistance since its opening in 2005. The reality is that United Way funded programs really do help our community as a whole, by helping people to function in a healthy way in our society: physically, mentally, and socially. The benefit to a single person can ripple out into society as they become more independent, self-sufficient and economically stable.

### **17. Am I helping people on welfare when I give to United Way?**

United Way funds programs that help many people in Dutchess and Orange Counties, including those with extreme needs. By providing funding to help individuals and families become financially stable and independent, your donation helps people gain greater independence in their lives by supporting their ability to provide for themselves. By connecting those in need with the services available to them, the burden on social service programs, health care systems and safety networks is reduced, therefore lower the cost to the entire community.

## **19. Does the money I give to United Way go to pay a lot for salaries?**

No. United Way currently employs 8 full-time and 3 part-time staff members to manage the annual collection and distribution of roughly \$2 million to services for our community. Staff services include: Coordinating the annual campaign and managing over 300 workplace accounts; Advancing the common good by making measurable and lasting changes in the lives of people; Using our leadership role in the community to foster collaboration and the efficient use of resources; Recruiting, training and supporting hundreds of volunteers, and; Communicating with more than 10,000 contributors year-round. In addition, United Way also provides staff support to the State Employees' Federated Appeal, the Combined Federal Campaign for federal employees, and several other community initiatives that improve lives for people of our counties.

## **20. Why is it important for me to give if my spouse/partner is already giving?**

United Way depends on every working person to give, particularly when both spouses/partners are fortunate enough to have jobs. For most couples, two small payroll deduction contributions add up to a greater total gift than either could afford to give outright on their own. When couples work for companies that offer matching funds for United Way donations, your money is then doubled—twice. Also, many organizations take pride in setting and achieving their own campaign goals – and rely on the support of as many employees as are able to give. Finally, for some families, a pledge from both partners can add up to more than \$1,000 a year -- qualifying both members of the couple for recognition as Leadership givers.

## **21. What are the advantages of payroll deduction?**

Having a set amount deducted from each paycheck enables most community investors to contribute far more generously than they would be able to do if they gave their entire contribution all at once. Nearly everyone can afford to contribute at least a couple of dollars a week to help people in our community -- although many could not afford to give larger amounts at one time.

## **22. How much am I expected to give?**

United Way never “expects” a specific dollar amount from any community investor, and we are grateful when a decision is made to support our efforts at any level. This is really a personal decision that only you can make, based on your income level and your desire to support local programs that help local people. However, one guide people can use is to donate .6% of salary for incomes below \$30,000; 1% of salary for incomes of \$30,000 to \$50,000; and 2% of salary for incomes of \$50,000 or more. We encourage everyone to consider giving at least one dollar a pay period (\$26 annually) -- or increasing their prior year's gift by at least one dollar a pay period. People who are fortunate enough to be earning \$50,000 or more per year are asked to consider giving at the leadership level of \$1,000 or more a year.

## **23. Why am I asked to increase my gift each year?**

Local employment patterns have shifted dramatically, increased costs coupled with cuts in state and federal funding have left many health and human-service programs struggling to survive. Those of us who have jobs must do all we can to sustain our community and the programs that enhance our local quality of life. United Way makes the most of your charitable dollar—but essential health and human care services will be crippled if we do not give generously.

## **24. Do I have a choice about where my money goes?**

Yes. Community investors have a range of choices:

- They can automatically give their donation to the United Way Community Fund, the most efficient and effective way to help the greatest number of local people with the most pressing health and human-service needs;
- Or they can designate a portion of their gift to any tax-exempt, non-profit organization -- including arts or environmental organizations and schools and churches. Designations are given directly to chosen organizations. Payments are made to these organizations in installments throughout the year, as pledges are collected. United Way charges a \$7.00 processing fee per designation to organizations in order to recover costs associated with distributing community investor choice gifts, as well as a 5% uncollectible fee.

*(Please note that some organizations, as well as state and federal facilities, do not use United Way pledge cards and may not permit the same open donor choice giving. These policies are outside the control of our United Way.)*

## **25. What are the benefits of Leadership Giving?**

Leadership giving is recognized as individuals or spouses/partners whose gifts total \$1,000 or more annually. As a Leadership contributor, you receive the United Way "United Every Day" newsletter, and are invited to special events that United Way holds to recognize and celebrate individual and corporate contributors. If you agree, we will publicly thank you for your donation by listing your name on our website and in our Annual Report. We will respect any community investor who wishes to be anonymous. Each Leadership Giver also receives a special lapel pin acknowledging his/her generous support. To learn more about the benefits, please contact one of our offices and we will send you our Leadership Giving brochure.

## **26. What is the Alexis de Tocqueville Society?**

The Alexis de Tocqueville Society provides recognition for individuals who contribute \$10,000 + each year. Their names appear in our Annual Report and they are listed in the National Alexis de Tocqueville Society roster and become part of an exclusive network of our country's most prominent community investors. Nationally, there are more than 16,000 members and in UPDATE: Dutchess and Orange Counties there were 11 Alexis de Tocqueville givers in 2010.

## **27. Didn't I hear something about some other United Way misusing funds?**

Each local United Way is an autonomous organization governed by local volunteers, ranging from CEOs to bankers to insurance managers to concerned citizens determined to make a positive difference. Those volunteers oversee all expenditures of the organization, helping to ensure that your donations are invested in local programs that help the people of Dutchess and Orange Counties. United Way finances are thoroughly audited by an independent accounting firm.

Almost 20 years ago, William Aramony, who was President and CEO of United Way of America in 1992, resigned and was later convicted of conspiracy, fraud and filing false tax returns. In the Fall of 2001, Aramony was released from prison after serving a 7-year sentence, and has no involvement with United Way on the local, state or national level. Additionally, at the beginning of 2002, United Way of the Greater Metro Area in Washington, DC, was criticized for questionable appropriation of funds. Both organizations made major changes to ensure that community investors' contributions would be ethically and effectively invested in solid programs to help people in their areas.



## **28. What if United Way funds an organization that I don't like?**

First, check our list of grants and partnerships on the back of your pledge card to make sure the organization in question is funded by our United Way. Each United Way is completely independent, and not all United Ways fund the same organizations in their communities. If an organization you oppose receives United Way funding, we invite you to note that in a special section on our Donor Choice form. United Way will honor your request and none of your Community Fund donation will benefit that organization.

## **29. Does United Way fund abortion services?**

No, United Way has never provided funding for abortions or abortion services, nor have we been asked to provide such funding.

## **30. What is the relationship between United Way and United Way Worldwide? What about United Way of New York State?**

Both United Way Worldwide and United Way of New York State act as a resource to help our local United Way learn from the experience of other United Way organizations. From learning the best ways to raise money or work with organizations to deliver programs that really help people, to training volunteers and staff, both organizations provide a network of state- and world-wide experience to help our United Way increase its ability to help our community.

Although United Way can look to the state and national organizations for assistance, our United Way is completely autonomous and governed by local volunteers representing towns and businesses from across Dutchess and Orange Counties.