

## United Way looks beyond monetary goal

By DEBRA SKODACK  
The Kansas City Star

The Kansas City area United Way launched its 2009 campaign Thursday with a number, but not a dollar amount.

For the first time in its history, the United Way of Greater Kansas City is not setting out to raise a specific amount of money.

**MORE LOCAL NEWS, A4**  
Raymore police apologize for killing cat.

Instead of setting an arbitrary campaign dollar goal in such an uncertain environment, United Way is challenging itself and the community to stretch in new directions — to be innovative and creative — to meet the needs of the community," campaign co-chair David Fowler said at a kick-off breakfast.

"We will focus on getting more peo-

SEE UNITED WAY | A12

# UNITED WAY: Agency focuses on changed lives, not the bottom line

FROM A1  
ple and companies involved in supporting United Way."

Last year, 86,000 people gave to the area United Way, which includes Jackson, Johnson, Platte, Clay and Cass counties.

Fowler said that meant about only one in four working people in the area give to the charity, even though United Way "touches nearly all of us in one way or another."

"We must do something to change that equation."

Separately on Thursday, the United Way of Wyandotte County announced a campaign goal of \$2.4 million, or 6 percent more than last year. Wyandotte County United Way officials said the goal had to be "bold" to meet increased needs for social services created by the recession.

The larger Kansas City area campaign isn't unique in measuring success less on dollar goals and more on how well the donations are helping the community, said Sally Fabens, a spokeswoman for United Way Worldwide in Alexandria, Va.

"It's a growing trend," Fabens said.

Many agencies that depend on those donations think the new approach is good.

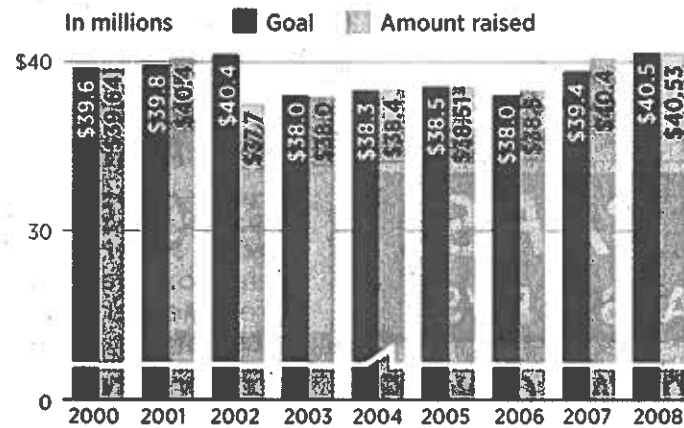
"It can be very easy to get lost in numbers or wrapped up in a goal, when ultimately it's all about people," said Scott Justvig, development director for the Salvation Army in Kansas City.

"There are real people in need in our community and real people who want to help, in whatever way they can. Like many other agencies, we are struggling with a significant increase in the number of people turning to us for help with basic needs, like food, clothing and shelter. The more people who get involved and commit to making a difference, the better off we are as a community."

United Way of Greater Kansas City funds regional programs and agencies — including some in Wyandotte County — that address the organization's areas of community impact: Children and families; financial stability; and the health

### UNITED WAY GIVING

In every year since 2000, except the one that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Kansas City area United Way has met its fundraising goals. This year, for the first time, the charity is setting no monetary target for fundraising. Instead, it hopes to attract 25,000 new donors.



Source: United Way

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

of people and communities.

The poor economy makes fundraising more challenging for many organizations. As the regional employment rate soared from 6 percent in July

2008 to 8.9 percent last July, the area lost 21,900 jobs.

All the more reason, some said, to take a different approach.

"I think it's prudent in these

difficult and uncertain times," said Matt Meyer, chief executive officer of the Greater Kansas City chapter of the American Red Cross.

Karen Wulfskuhle, executive director of United Community Services of Johnson County, likes the people approach, too.

"The act of giving can build a community," she said. "More people need to be concerned about the common good."

Even those who give like the idea.

"It creates both greater awareness of unmet needs currently in our community as well as opportunities for future support," said Carol Hallquist, Hallmark Cards Inc.'s vice president-corporate philanthropy.

Hallmark was among the seven pacesetter companies that have already held United

Way campaigns and reported results of \$4.4 million in donations at Thursday's breakfast. Hallmark raised \$2.63 million and increased the number of employees giving to United Way this year by 1.2 percent.

There hasn't been an emphasis on a campaign dollar goal for the last five years in the Tacoma, Wash., area, and it hasn't significantly affected how much people have given, said Rick Allen, president of the United Way of Pierce County.

"You need to move the discussion from how much money is in the thermometer to how are we doing in changing people's lives," Allen said. "It all about letting them know how their gifts change lives."

And there were those who spoke at Thursday's breakfast meeting in Kansas City about how United Way agencies can change a person — including Stephanie Tillman, a once-homeless woman who is now a business owner.

"It has meant a new life," she said.

The United Way of Greater Kansas City's campaign ends Nov. 17. The United Way of Wyandotte County's campaign ends Nov. 18.

To reach Debra Skodack, call 816-234-4738 or send e-mail to dskodack@kcstar.com.