

United Way invests in community

**by Adam MacDonald, Guest Columnist
from United Way of Wyandotte County**

Did you know that the United Way of Wyandotte County has many avenues by which it invests in our community?

YouthBuild KCK is a grant-funded program administered by United Way. It is a 10-month training and education program for undereducated and unemployed youth, ages 16-24. Trainees learn construction skills and life skills through community service. More than 100 youth have graduated from the program in three years.

As costs continue to rise, particularly during the winter months, so do requests for utility and housing assistance. During 2008, United Way received \$336,067 from the Board of Public Utilities' utility assistance program and federal emergency funds that were then distributed by 10 partner agencies to help low-income residents pay their utility and rent bills.

United Way coordinates the state grant-funded Tri-County Smart Start program, which works to ensure that children enrolled in early childhood education centers are cared for in a professional environment, enabling them to enter elementary school prepared to succeed.

United Way has become a partner with a variety of agencies, including the Community Health Council of Wyandotte County, the Latino Health Initiative and KC CareLink to build a healthy community

by increasing access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured, providing health education and distributing discount prescription cards.

United Way is probably best known for its annual community fund-raising campaign. The 2008 campaign raised \$2.38 million, which will provide services in three key areas: meeting basic needs; nurturing children and families; and promoting health and quality of life. Those funds support 53 programs provided by 29 agencies that serve Wyandotte Countians.

United Way of Wyandotte County is focused on increasing the community's understanding of human needs and mobilizing resources to meet those needs in partnership with individuals, businesses, social service agencies, organized labor, the faith community, government agencies and nonprofits.

Although Wyandotte County faces many challenges, we know that by joining together and investing in our community we can have a positive effect. Contact the United Way of Wyandotte County by calling 913-371-3674 or visit www.unitedway-wyco.org for assistance, to donate, and to volunteer.