

VOICES

COMMENT

Long-time volunteer

OCTOBER 8, 2009 | 6

Ah, yes, fall is in the air, there is a coolness in the air, and leaves are starting to turn. In my world, some of the major topics are football at a variety of levels, the baseball pennant races and the United Way campaign.

In case you missed it, the United Way annual drive raises funds to aid a variety of agencies ranging from Red Cross, Salvation Army to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The United Way touches all our lives and certainly helps improve the quality of life for local residents. For nearly half a century, I have been involved in United Way, and I firmly believe that it is the most efficient method of providing charitable contributions to worthwhile agencies.

I started my volunteering with United Way in 1963 when my friend Kirk Hammer was assistant director. In the early years, I spent some time going up and down Minnesota Avenue in Kansas City, Kan., collecting contributions from small businesses. Since that time and in two other communities, I have been involved in the campaign.

Locally I worked with Jerry McGhee as Bonner Springs-Edwardsville co-chairperson, and we canvassed businesses of all sizes in the community.

I might add that Leavenworth County also conducts a United Way campaign. According to its Web site, the Leavenworth County United Way was started in 1956, and it raises more than \$300,000 to aid a variety of agencies in Leavenworth County.

The goal is "helping families and youth succeed and, support the vulnerable and aging population." They work to bring communities together to focus on priorities.

The United Way of Wyandotte County remains an independent agency. Locally, the board chose not to join the larger Greater Kansas City United Way. I can't speak for everyone on the board, but I felt our one-county agency was bet-

ter positioned to know the needs and to reach out to smaller agencies such as our local Vaughn-Trent Community Services, Inc.

Yes, that's correct, Vaughn-Trent receives some United Way money, which is used to alleviate local problems. Of course, I believe that almost all United Way agencies touch lives in our community. We all know young people who receive character building training in the

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, YMCA and others. The Red Cross provides a variety of services to Bonner Springs and Edwardsville as does the Salvation Army.

All of us who are volunteers this year know that things will be tough. Sadly, there are

many who are out of work and facing financial problems. That's the reason to give what you can afford. The needs are growing, and there are many who need services.

The United Way took a very positive approach and raised the overall campaign goal to \$2.4 million, which is a six percent increase from last year. The goal for the Bonner Springs-Edwardsville Division is \$14,492, which is also an increase of six percent from the previous year. Those living in the western Wyandotte County, east of I-435 and west of I-635 gave a goal of \$12,744.

The United Way is led by a volunteer board of directors who make policy decisions.

A tremendous amount of work is done by volunteers who truly believe in community betterment. I believe that all of the volunteers have a vision of what it takes to solve social problems. Remember that this is done by local contributions, not the government.

Yes, I will be out with other volunteers working to solicit donations for United Way. I sincerely hope that you give some serious thought to making a contribution. You will be helping your friends and neighbors right here at home.

CLAUSIE SMITH

