

LIVING UNITED

A publication of United Way of Greater Rochester

Summer 2009



Tim Jackson and Nemo

VOLUNTEERISM IS ALIVE YEAR-ROUND.

Each year, summer in Rochester comes alive with so many great activities. Everything from festival-goers on Park Avenue to the joyful cheers of children swimming at Genesee Valley Park tells you that great days are ahead. We all want to get out and get moving around our community, and one way to do that is by volunteering.

In May 2009 at our annual Day of Caring, United Way of Greater Rochester, along with the help of more than 130 companies, organizations and social groups, rallied more than 9,000 people to volunteer around the community. It was truly a sight to see so many people wearing their signature LIVE UNITED t-shirts and picking up shovels to garden, brushes to paint, and books to read to children. It was a time for giving back, for being grateful enough to care about where we live, to support so many important programs.

But we needn't wait to do our part just once a year. Volunteerism is alive year round. Every month, United Way matches nearly 300 volunteers with projects across Rochester. Our goal this year is to reach 280,000 volunteer hours in our community. Reaching this goal will not only be a remarkable testament to the giving nature of our people, it will also equal about \$2,000,000 worth of manpower.

As you thumb through the pages of this issue, consider how you might make a contribution as a volunteer. Ask yourself what you can do with just a small amount of your time. One of the great things about volunteering is that it can take many forms and it can happen on your time. Maybe you volunteer as a board member for a local organization. Or perhaps you check in on an elderly neighbor once a week or help a new neighbor out with his garden. It's all volunteerism when you take the time to care. Time really can make a difference. What are you doing with yours?

United Way finalized our annual fundraising campaign just a few weeks ago, but the effort to LIVE UNITED continues. Whether you choose to volunteer through United Way or any other avenue, make the effort this year and share your story at liveunitedrochester.org. Your story will inspire others to do the same and United Way will add your contribution to the live counter of volunteer hours on our website.

On behalf of the many volunteers in our community, thank you for choosing to LIVE UNITED.



Dianne Ostrander

CWA at Frontier Communications
Steward and Executive Board Member of Local 1170,
Chair of AFL /CIO, Community Services Committee
United Way Community Investment Cabinet Member

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED





Dianne Ostrander

Sally Krowl prepares for her weekly route as a Meals on Wheels volunteer.



Meals On Wheels volunteers have delivered meals and smiles for more than 50 years in Rochester. To find out how you can LIVE UNITED and help Meals on Wheels, visit liveunitedrochester.org.



MEALS (AND VOLUNTEERS) ON-THE-GO

Sally Kroll has been delivering meals to people across Rochester for more than 16 years. She's not a caterer or a restaurateur. Sally is a volunteer for Meals On Wheels, a Visiting Nurse Service program. On a rainy Thursday afternoon in May, she carefully loads meals into the trunk of her car. "I have thirteen meals to deliver today," she says, pausing for a breath in between loading coolers. "There are quite a few people waiting for these and I know they're looking forward to seeing me."

For more than 50 years, Meals On Wheels has been delivering meals to Rochesterians in need, the vast majority of them homebound or ill seniors with little to no family in the area. This year, though, the program is experiencing an upsurge in demand and has a waiting list for its services. "In years past, we've been able to accommodate nearly every request, but in this economy we see a growing number of people who simply can't afford basics like food, let alone a balanced meal," says Phil Shippers, director of Meals On Wheels. A recent United Way survey confirms that 93 percent of area emergency service providers anticipate an increase in demand this year. Many of them have already been forced to turn people away.

Another challenge is the cost of running a food-delivery program in this economy. Food costs have steadily risen over the last three years on staple foods like rice and flour. "While we've been incredibly fortunate to partner with agencies like the American Red Cross in employing creative meal-sourcing strategies, costs are definitely on the rise and we all feel it," adds Shippers. Now more than ever, Meals On Wheels relies heavily on volunteer help.

More than 2,000 volunteers deliver food each week for Meals On Wheels. Beyond hot meals, though, these volunteers say they also serve friendship. "I deliver to the same people each week and I've really connected on a personal level with them," says Kroll. "Their eyes just light up when they see me and there is never a day they don't thank you." For many Meals On Wheels recipients, conversation with a volunteer is the only personal contact they have all day. "Our volunteers are the life-source of the program," says Shippers. "Today, volunteer-driven programs are unique and our volunteers make Meals On Wheels what it is because of their generosity and commitment."

As for the future, Meals On Wheels, a United Way-funded program, has opportunities for change and growth. "Our requests for service grow by the hundreds each year and they will continue to increase, especially in this economy," says Shippers. "Plus, people are living longer and they're maintaining their independence at home." Meals On Wheels will continue its outreach and education and the development of its nutrition programs. "It's incredible to know that there are people in our community who simply will not have food to eat if we don't lend a hand," adds Shippers. "We must and will meet those needs."

LIVING UNITED PROFILE: WEGMANS FOOD MARKETS

Colleen Wegman, 2010
United Way Campaign
Chair.



LEADERSHIP GIVING

TOM FERRARESE is one of 4,000 leadership givers who LIVE UNITED by giving a gift of \$1,000 or more each year to United Way. Ferrarese, the Democratic Commissioner at the Monroe County Board of Elections, has given throughout his professional career.

“Giving to others is part of who I am and what I do,” says Ferrarese. “I have always felt that those who can afford to give should contribute. It’s not about how much you give, it’s about giving what you can to help.” A city resident, Ferrarese gives to programs that are close to his heart like those that help city children and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender youth in Rochester to feel accepted and safe in their community.

Ferrarese has always been a strong advocate for giving locally and has made it his calling to encourage his co-workers to give to programs that support causes they believe in. “Everything starts at home,” he explains. “If you help here, you help the state, and ultimately our country.”





Twenty-two local stores, thousands of employees and a year-round effort. These are some key elements that are the backbone of Wegmans Food Markets United Way campaign, a remarkable effort that garnered just over \$2.3 million locally. At a time when it might be easiest to place philanthropy and community support initiatives on a back burner, Wegmans remains wholly committed to working toward a common goal.

Wegmans says the foundation for its success comes from educating staff and building a culture of giving back. "We actually start planning our campaign in September," says Kathy Magin, campaign coordinator at Wegmans and 2005 campaign coordinator of the year. "This gives us time to develop the tools we need to reach out to every employee and get the message out." The message: Give back and build a better community.

With a long history of community philanthropy and leadership, Wegmans indeed lives by its own words, starting with the Wegman family. Robert and Peggy Wegman received the Alexis de Tocqueville Award in 2005. Danny Wegman was appointed the 1988 United Way Campaign Chair and in 2010, Colleen Wegman, president of the company, will follow in the leadership footsteps of her family as United Way Campaign Chair. "United Way has served our community and worked to make life better for all who live here," says Colleen. "I'm so looking forward to my role as campaign chair and I know the people of Rochester will once again answer this great organization's call to help their neighbors."

Locally, 83 percent of Wegmans employees give to the United Way campaign and, according to Colleen, it's these employees who are the lifeblood of Wegmans' community service efforts. "Our employees are the ones giving back their time and money for others and they are the ones coming to us with new ideas of how Wegmans can give back. Without their hard work, our internal campaign and other efforts to LIVE UNITED would not be possible."

Beyond giving dollars, Wegmans employees also plan to contribute upwards of 3,500 volunteer hours this summer at the company's annual Season of Caring fruit and vegetable gardens, at both Hillside Children's Center at Lehigh and St. Joseph's Villa. Wegmans staff will volunteer throughout the summer, side by side with the centers' residents and staff, to plant, tend and harvest the gardens. Volunteers also teach residents how to prepare and store the harvested produce. "This project is really great for our residents because they learn patience and so many important life skills," said Heather VanDyne, volunteer coordinator at Hillside Shared Services. "It also helps build their confidence because they get to actually see what they've helped create."

Although Season of Caring will be the organization's volunteer focus this summer, volunteering is a year-round effort at Wegmans. Each store is encouraged to develop its own neighborhood volunteer project each year and to participate in United Way's annual Day of Caring. Wegmans also remains highly committed to the development of United Way's Young Leaders Society, a group of young professionals committed to giving, advocating and volunteering.



FIRST-TIME GIVING

Hundreds of new donors this year took a first step to helping their community by donating to the United Way campaign. This year, **JOSHUA HERGENRODER** decided to become a United Way donor mainly because of the economy.

"I was laid off very unexpectedly in December," says Hergenroder. "Thankfully, I was able to find a job shortly after, but the whole experience made me realize how many people out there are less fortunate." Hergenroder, a Web strategy marketing specialist at BizWonk, heard about the United Way campaign through news media and felt deeply that he had to reach out to the families and individuals going through tough economic times. "I just needed to help. So, I donated to the Community Fund because I felt it was the best way to spread my dollar and help as many people as possible," he adds.

When asked if he might donate in the future, Hergenroder is quick to respond: "Absolutely. It's so easy to give what you can to help so many people."

QUICKTAKES



HOMERUN FOR CAMPAIGN

Joined by more than 2,000 United Way supporters, volunteers, community leaders and staff at Frontier Field on June 4, United Way closed its 2009 LIVE UNITED campaign with the announcement that \$28,750,180 was raised by the Rochester community this year. Also announced at the event was the selection of Colleen Wegman, president of Wegmans Food Markets, as the 2010 campaign chair.

With the fundraising goal reached, United Way also gave updates on its other two goals. To date, people have logged more than 113,000 volunteer hours, including hours from United Way's Day of Caring. United Way has also launched an advocacy portal on uwrochester.org/advocate and is signing up people to advocate for issues that affect Rochester.

The celebration featured company campaign recognition on the stadium's electronic video board, a first pitch by United Way 75-year loyal donor Jack Fawkes and a center-field reveal of campaign results by students from the Enrico Fermi School No. 17.

Our great thanks to the Rochester community for choosing to LIVE UNITED and for your support of our 2009 campaign.

C.A.S.H. CLOSES 2009 TAX SEASON

Hundreds of volunteers from the legal and financial communities this year helped more than 12,000 Rochesterians on their road to financial stability through C.A.S.H., a United Way-funded program led by Empire Justice Center. C.A.S.H. offers, among other services, free income tax preparation to help eligible families take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

C.A.S.H. – Creating Assets, Savings and Hope – helps qualifying individuals build stronger financial futures. In addition to free tax preparation, C.A.S.H. offers money-management education, credit counseling, savings programs, and home-ownership programs. Rochester's C.A.S.H program is part of a national initiative designed to assist working families and individuals in accessing Earned Income and Child Tax Credits while receiving assistance with federal and state tax preparation. "The heart of our work is in helping working families to get, keep, and grow their assets," says Eygabroad.

This year, C.A.S.H. facilitated \$21.5 million in total refunds for its clients. "These dollars ultimately help to sustain our community because when individuals and families are financially stable, our entire community thrives," says Rita Eygabroad, C.A.S.H. director.

Although the program is most active during tax season, C.A.S.H. signs up volunteers year-round. Volunteers are needed in many ways - as tax preparers, C.A.S.H. advisors, front desk managers, translators, outreach workers and administrative assistants. No prior tax background is needed and all tax returns are reviewed by qualified professional staff before filing.

ONE VOICE

CAN HELP KEEP CRITICAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

ONE PHONE CALL

CAN HELP KIDS HAVE A CHANCE EARLY-ON IN LIFE.

ONE LETTER

CAN HELP KEEP FAMILIES HEALTHY IN ROCHESTER.

ADVO CATE.



RIGHT NOW

WHAT CAN YOUR VOICE DO
WHEN JOINED WITH THOSE
OF THOUSANDS OF OTHERS?

FIND OUT TODAY AT UWROCHESTER.ORG/ADVOCATE



Margaret Sánchez

FOSTERING DISCUSSION... CREATING CHANGE

How many jobs has Rochester gained over the past few years and in what sectors? What percentage of children in our region are living in poverty? This information and more is part of the focus of a new community-indicators project led by ACT Rochester. Jointly funded by United Way and the Community Foundation, ACT Rochester seeks to transform community problem-solving and decision-making by focusing on the critical issues identified by objective data.

Launched in early June, ACT Rochester's Web site – www.actrochester.org – is rich in trend summaries, charts, graphs and a wealth of additional information that covers a seven-county region, including Monroe County. The site also provides opportunities for a deeper assessment of the data and ensuing community discussion and debate by users. "This program and its resources have the potential to really bring people together so we can all use this timely and independent data to align resources and make a difference in our communities," says Margaret Sánchez, chair of the ACT Rochester task force. Data on the site will be continually updated to add to the more than 170 pages of text and 650 graphs and charts that are currently published.



WEEK OF CARING 2009

With many area non-profit agencies reporting decreased funding and increased demands this year, volunteers are a key resource to help close the gap. In fact, quite a few agencies wait through the year for projects to be completed by volunteers in just one day: United Way's Day of Caring. "Without the support of these volunteers, we simply couldn't get it all done," says Madeleine Reynolds-Bolz, executive director of Crisis Nursery, where Thomson-Reuters volunteers painted the organization's living room and hallways and cleaned the gardens.

Making a difference is just one of the many reasons that more than 9,000 volunteers at this year's Day of Caring helped complete nearly 500 projects from painting and gardening to cleaning and reading to kids. Team-building was another benefit. "This was a great opportunity to not only give back, but to also connect with our peers," said Kristina Cornejo, an Everest Institute volunteer, who joined her co-workers at Charles Settlement House to serve ice cream to seniors.

Traditionally, Day of Caring has involved the day-long participation of volunteers. This year, though, many volunteers simply couldn't commit the same amount of time because of workforce reductions or tighter work schedules. In response, United Way developed a new volunteer initiative, Hour of Caring, during which volunteers spent just one hour of their time reading to children at community centers and daycares across Rochester. More than 200 volunteers participated at this year's event and United Way plans to offer additional Hour of Caring opportunities throughout the year.

In all, 64,000 volunteer hours were logged at this year's Day of Caring, the equivalent of at least a half-million dollars worth of manpower. On average, more than 3,000 volunteer opportunities are available each month at liveunitedrochester.org.



The Housing Council's Foreclosure Prevention Project has helped hundreds of Rochesterians to stay in their homes and, in effect, stabilize communities. To find out how you can LIVE UNITED and help The Housing Council, visit liveunitedrochester.org.



SAFE AT HOME

In June 2008, Nancy Dann was greeted by a foreclosure notice on the front door of her Greece, N.Y. home. She'd spent the last six months in a battle with her mortgage company and it had finally come down to this. "I was embarrassed, exhausted from running in circles, and scared that I would lose my home," she says. "I never thought I'd end up like this."

After suffering an injury to her shoulder in 2004, Dann was unable to work at full capacity in her profession as a registered nurse, leaving her with a lowered income and growing medical costs. Four years later, hers was just one of 2,500 homes in Rochester that were subject to the start of foreclosure proceedings, the vast majority of which stem from loss of income, loss of employment, or increased medical bills.

In the end, though, home foreclosure is about more than just losing a house. The Housing Council, which handled 702 cases across Rochester last year, assists homeowners in avoiding foreclosure through its Foreclosure Prevention Project. "Foreclosure has a spillover effect on the community at large," says Alex Castro, executive director at The Housing Council. When properties are foreclosed upon, the initial downfall rests with the homeowner, including negative tax and credit implications. Beyond that, a number of families are uprooted and even forced apart. "Children are some of the biggest victims of foreclosures because they are often forced to leave their schools," says Castro. "Once neighborhoods become dotted with vacant homes, the negative impact spreads to the entire community as homes neighboring a foreclosed property can diminish in value by 10 to 15 percent."

Dann has certainly experienced the personal upheaval of foreclosure. "I've owned my home for 11 years and I raised my children here," she says. "You go through so many feelings when someone tries to take something that you've worked so hard to achieve." The Foreclosure Prevention Project helped Dann identify opportunities for reduced loan rates and develop a feasible repayment plan while communicating directly with her lenders. "Homeowners trying to prevent foreclosure speak a very emotional language and lenders speak a financial language," says Castro. "We serve as an interpreter and connect the two in a way they can both understand."

The Foreclosure Prevention Project, a United Way-funded program, maintains an over 85 percent success rate in preventing home foreclosures. "Our goal is to keep the homeowner in their home for as long as it's financially feasible," says Castro. The most important step in accomplishing this is reaching homeowners as soon as they learn they are at risk. "The more time we have with them, the better we can help."

For Dann, there is finally a reason to celebrate. In early June, she signed approved loan-modification papers that effectively prevented a foreclosure. "I am so relieved," she says. "This whole process has been a long, hard road but the help I received [at Foreclosure Prevention Project] has really been my guiding light and I'm so thankful for it."

Alex Castro and Susan Lerch of The Housing Council work together on a home foreclosure case.



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LOYAL DONORS

JACK FAWKES' social calendar and smile belie his age. At 93 years old, Fawkes – a lifelong Rochesterian – embodies the LIVE UNITED call to action through his loyal giving and dedication as a volunteer.

Fawkes was just 19 years old when he began donating \$1 per week to United Way, then the Community Chest. That was more than 75 years ago when Fawkes worked at the downtown Sheraton Hotel. Fawkes, one of two bellhops at the hotel, worked 54 hours a week, making just \$11.22 per paycheck. Still, he didn't think twice when he committed nearly 10 percent of his weekly pay to United Way. "Back then, that was a lot of money," says Fawkes. "But every time I've given, it's always come back to me somehow."

Today, Fawkes – who has lived through two national recessions – remains one of United Way's most loyal donors and supporters. "These are tough times, there's no doubt about it," he says. "You don't have to give a lot of money, but give something." Fawkes is one of many Rochesterians who make up the long and proud history of answering community needs. In 1918, more than 103,658 Rochester residents donated more than \$4.6 million to the Community Chest, the fund that would one day become United Way of Greater Rochester

We will continue to recognize our loyal donors online at liveunitedrochester.org. Please let us know if you or someone you know has been a longtime friend of United Way. We would love to share more stories about our loyal donors.

