11-18-2010

United Way Victory Celebration

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• Good afternoon. We did it! As of Tuesday, all of us who are part of Western Michigan University's United Way Campaign met--and succeeded our goal. We met our goal of $275,000--and we kept going. As of late yesterday, we are more than $6,000 above that goal and still counting.

• It was an ambitious goal--a stretch. Our goal for 2010 was $35,000 higher than the 2009 goal. We knew it was ambitious but we also knew this campus community could and would rise to the challenge of sustaining those in our community who rely on United Way agencies for assistance. Every dollar given, 88 cents directly supports programs that improve the quality of life in Kalamazoo County

• It was a stretch for us, and the overall community goal of just over $9 million is a stretch as well. When you think about the economic stresses every family faces, the fact that so many in our communities still find a way to step up and help others is all the more remarkable. I'm so proud to be a part of this community and to be part of a University community that is so connected and caring to the community that surrounds it.

• This community is recognized nationally for its United Way outreach,

• I want to thank our campaign volunteers for an outstanding job. First of all, Joe Reish did an amazing job. Joe, I don't think any of us would have guessed at the level of gusto you would bring to this role. I, for one, have an entirely new perspective on your talents. Thank you.
• All of you who spent time on this effort should take enormous pride in the level of campus participation you sparked. More than 1,500 campus donors have stepped forward to support United Way. We'll keep counting for a few weeks still, so there is still a chance for more to come forward, but as president of this University I could not be prouder of what we've accomplished this fall in terms of raising money for United Way.

• Here's a bit of information about how WMU stepped met the challenge:
  • 1,346 employees made pledges
  • 208 retirees contributed
  • 293 people were first-time contributors
  • 402 of those who gave last year increased their gift this year
  • we had 80 leadership givers who pledged $1,000 or more
  • 16 departments or offices had 100% participation

• Wow. What a statement about this campus community. But just as important is the way this community "gives, advocates, volunteers and lives united."

• Members of this campus community put themselves behind those dollars as well. As I read the roster of agencies and initiatives supported by the United Way, I recognize many in which WMU people invest their time and talent as well.
  • American Red Cross
  • Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Kalamazoo
  • Community Advocates (for persons with developmental disabilities)
  • Constance Brown Hearing Centers
  • Family and Children Services
  • Goodwill Industries
  • Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan
• MRC Industries
• Volunteer Center of Greater Kalamazoo
• The Constance Brown Hearing Center
• The WMU Center for Disability Services

These are agencies that we interact with professionally and personally in myriad ways. I doubt very many of us could make it through that list without hearing the name of an initiative or an agency that has a direct impact on our lives or the lives of people we know and care about.

What you do builds a better life for our families and for our community. George Washington Carver may have said it best, “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because, someday in your life, you will have been all of these.”

• Thank you.