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United Way Victory Celebration

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• Good afternoon. We're not quite to our final goal--yet, but this is by no means a premature victory celebration. We are close. As of last night, we were at more than 90 percent of our goal. As is the case every year, we will continue to count pledge cards and donations for the next several weeks. Because I know the calibre of this campus community, I have no doubt that we'll meet and maybe surpass our goal a bit. We continue to be one of this county's top giving organizations.

• It is an ambitious goal. We have asked our campus to continue to stretch itself and reach deep. Our goal for 2012-13 is $300,000.

• This campus community, however, continues to rise to the challenge of sustaining those in our community who rely on United Way agencies for assistance. For every dollar given, 86 cents directly supports programs that improve the quality of life in Kalamazoo County--and now in Battle Creek--our new United Way partners.

• $300,000 is a stretch for us, and the overall goal of the two communities, $15.35 million is a stretch as well, but I think both goals will be met. 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 "Lives United" and is so connected with and caring for the community that surrounds it.

• The Kalamazoo community has been recognized nationally for its United Way outreach, and we are enormously pleased at the potential of the new United Way structure that unites two communities with a strong record of giving. We've managed to combine forces but still offer members of both communities a way to differentiate their giving and support.

• I want to thank our campaign volunteers for an outstanding job. First of all, Joe Reish once again outdid himself. Joe, I don't think any of us would have guessed at the level of commitment you would bring to this role. Last year, I pointed out the "gusto" with which you performed this role I'm at a loss for how to top that term for this year's effort. 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 members of our campus community--faculty, staff and retirees have stepped forward to support United Way. And our students have stepped up and mounted campus events to raise funds.

• 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
more proud of what we've accomplished this fall in terms of raising money for United Way.

• Here's a bit of information about how WMU met the challenge:
  • 1,302 employees made pledges
  • 208 retirees contributed
  • At the end of the day yesterday, we stood at $270,776.

• 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.

I've used this quote before, but I can't resist using it again because it continues to sum up our particular role in our community.

Maya Angeolou once said, "When you learn, teach. When you get, give."

We continue to do both, and our communities are better for it. Thank you.