

September 10, 2009
For Immediate Release



United Way Announces Goal of Getting 25,000 New Donors as Volunteers Launch 2009 Fundraising Campaign Pacesetter Companies Raise \$4.4 Million

(Kansas City, MO)----Challenging, unpredictable, unprecedented. All have been used to describe the extended downturn in the economy. But today, during the kickoff of the 2009 Kansas City area United Way campaign, volunteer leaders used words like compassionate, generous and optimistic in describing why they believe this year's community-wide fundraising effort will be a success.

Campaign Co-chair David Fowler said, "Nonprofit agencies in our community are being overwhelmed by the number of people seeking help. Many are seeing a 25% to 35% increase in demand. As managing partner of KPMG, an accounting firm, I'm a numbers man and those types of statistics catch my attention. So does the statistic that only one in four working people in our community currently gives to United Way, especially knowing that United Way touches nearly all of us in one way or another. We must do something to change that equation."

Speaking to more than 700 community leaders and United Way supporters, Fowler said, "This year, instead of setting an arbitrary campaign dollar goal in such an uncertain environment, United Way is challenging itself and the community to stretch in new directions—to be innovative and creative—to meet the needs of the community. We will focus on getting more people and companies involved in supporting United Way. Our goal will be to recruit 25,000 new donors; people who did not give to United Way last year. We believe that increasing participation is the best strategy for United Way to meet the growing needs of the community. Think of the power within the numbers, if everyone who gave to United Way last year gives again this year, plus encourages just one new donor to give---now that's living united for Kansas City. "

Campaign Co-chair Ed Tervol said, "As a labor leader I can tell you that a lot of people are hurting right now. Many families that used to have two incomes now only have one person bringing home a paycheck. During this year's United Way campaign, we will be talking about the growing need that exists in the community and the surprising number of families seeking help from United Way funded programs for first time in their lives."

Tervol told the crowd, "United Way is one of the most efficient and effective charities around. It supports everything from domestic violence shelters to literacy programs, from community health clinics to programs for seniors, from Children's Mercy Hospitals to the Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the YMCA. United Way supports more than 350 health and human service programs in the Kansas City area. They make our community a better place to live and it is important that every one of those programs is there when someone needs them."

As Tervol and Fowler were describing the challenge ahead, they had reason for optimism based on the results from seven pacesetter companies. Together, those companies have already raised \$4.4 million to help get this year's Kansas City area United Way campaign off to a great start. Many of them focused on increasing the number of people giving, which helped increase how much money they raised.

- Hallmark Cards and its employees announced they have raised \$2.63 million for United Way this year. That total includes gifts from 24 Tocqueville Society Members who are giving at least \$10,000 and 334 Leadership givers who are pledging \$1,200 or more.
- UMB encouraged employees to show their “pacesetter pride” which they did, as employee giving increased 20%. When all the dollars were counted UMB raised \$462,603, and also increased the number of UMB Leadership givers by 46% to a total of 118.
- KCP&L and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers are still wrapping up this year’s campaign, but together labor and management at KCP&L have already raised \$773,371 for United Way. They had 115 Leadership donors. Their dollar total is sure to rise as they actively seek additional contributions from retirees of KCP&L.
- Employees of Children’s Mercy Hospitals & Clinics know what a difference United Way can make in people’s lives. It was a factor, as Children’s Mercy topped its goal, raising \$284,977. That’s almost a 10% increase over the amount employees raised last year.
- MarketSphere is not a particularly large corporation, but their employees certainly are generous. Together, 70 MarketSphere employees pledged \$104,424. That means their average gift was more than \$1,400.
- McCownGordon Construction knows that the needs are greater this year and they responded by raising \$54,775 for United Way. That is a 59% increase compared to the total raised last year. Eighty-three percent of McCownGordon employees made pledges to United Way.
- United Way of Greater Kansas City employees showed that their commitment to the mission of United Way by pledging \$97,263. It was 15% increase over what UWGKC employees pledged in 2008 and represents an average gift of more than \$1,300.

United Way campaign leaders hope that the outstanding pacesetter results will serve as positive, motivating examples for other companies during this year’s campaign. To help build excitement and enthusiasm, United Way is declaring the week of October 2nd through October 9th as Live United Week. During that week, companies and individuals will be encouraged to do something extra to help those in need in our community by supporting United Way and encouraging others to join them.

Live United Week will include a jeans day, where companies will be encouraged to let those employees who donate an extra \$5 to United Way wear jeans to work that day. Companies will also be encouraged to collect canned goods that will be donated to Harvesters to stock food pantries, soup kitchens and community shelters.

Once again, during this year’s United Way campaign, employees who give one percent of their salary or more will be entered into a drawing for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The V-Rod Muscle bike is being donated by the Kansas City Harley-Davidson plant. That drawing will take place in March 2010.

United Way helps to fund more than 350 health and human service programs throughout the Greater Kansas City area. The 10-week community-wide fundraising effort will conclude with a Victory Celebration at the Overland Park Convention Center on Tuesday, November 17th.

For additional information, contact: Ron Howard
United Way
(816) 559-4644