



**United Way
of Bradley County**

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Coach Pat Summitt encourages United Way supporters to make a difference

Tennessee Lady Vols Coach Pat Summitt encouraged volunteers and supporters to meet their community goal and “win a championship for United Way” at the organization’s Annual Campaign Kickoff Tuesday afternoon.

The event, which traditionally begins the United Way of Bradley County campaign, was held at the Peerless Road Church of God of Prophecy. Over 470 people in attendance heard early pledge reports from Pacesetter and Challenger firms that put United Way donations for this year’s campaign at \$904,279.

The 2009 United Way campaign goal is \$2,250,000.

Coach Summitt said that United Way of Bradley County can reach that goal if everyone thinks about what an impact they can make on a person’s life by making a donation.

“Put a smile on your face, and give a little bit more and you can make a huge difference here,” she said.

This was the second time that Coach Summitt has spoken at the United Way of Bradley County kickoff luncheon. Three years ago, she addressed a group of United Way supporters, starting off with a rendition of “Rocky Top.” On Tuesday, she officially struck the gavel beginning the campaign to a sea of streamers and confetti launched from different corners of the church gymnasium.

She spoke of the love she has for United Way and told supporters at Tuesday's luncheon that United Way is her No. 1 charity. In fact, she and then Vols' coach Kevin O'Neill co-chaired the United Way of Greater Knoxville campaign in the mid 1990s.

"I remember going to the agencies, and returning with a tear in my eye every time. These visits were life changing for me," she said.

Coach Summitt, who is the winningest coach in college basketball history, said that while she will be remembered for her coaching prowess, she also wants to also be remembered as someone who cared for others, and United Way is a great means of showing that compassion.

"That's how you should want to be remembered ... how you invest in others," she said. "I am asking all of you to invest in Cleveland in a positive, positive way by helping United Way."

United Way of Bradley County Board Chairman Stephen Crass thanked Coach Summitt for "encouraging all of us to make a difference with this campaign. We know that the results will be impressive, in spite of our challenges this year."

Several of the early campaigns reported partial totals, as their campaigns are still in progress, while others reported totals that exceeded their 2008 pledges. Each of these companies will be recognized at the United Way of Bradley County's first report luncheon on Sept. 16.

Companies servings as Pacesetter and Challenger firms include Whirlpool Cooking, Whirlpool eXperience Center, Cormetech, Manufacturers Chemicals, Brenda Lawson & Associates, Athens Federal Community Bank, Bank of Cleveland, BB&T Bank, First Tennessee Bank, Regions Bank, Southern Heritage Bank, SunTrust Bank, United Community Bank, Easy Auto/Sunrise Acceptance, SkyRidge Medical Center, Peyton's Southeastern, Procter & Gamble/Duracell, Cleveland Utilities, Cleveland City Schools, Bradley County Schools, Lee University and Life Care Centers of America.

"Most of these companies are still in the process of holding their meetings so they do not have the final results today; they will help us set the pace, however, and encourage all of our companies and individuals to get their own campaigns started and make a difference in the lives of thousands of service recipients in our community," Crass added.

He added that he hoped supporters would “thoughtfully give to help our neighbors. This will be a very difficult campaign with the troubles in our economy and that is even more reason why we all need to help a little bit more.”

This year’s campaign is chaired by Darlia Conn, Janey Cooke, Dan Cooke and Paul Conn. Rather than the married couples working as team leaders, campaign divisions are divided between the women and the men.

Their campaign division chairs will be announced soon, and will give division results at the Sept. 16 report luncheon.

Tuesday’s kickoff luncheon was hosted by the Cleveland Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club of Cleveland.

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