



United Way
of Bradley County

Volunteers, donors recognized at United Way Awards Banquet

It was a festive evening at the United Way of Bradley County's Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet as the organization announced reaching and exceeding the 2009 campaign goal of \$2,250,000.

United Way campaign officials and volunteers were not sure if that goal would be reached this year, but in mid-February, pledges finally reached that point. The total in pledges announced at Tuesday's (March 16, 2010) banquet was \$2,264,834, which is 101 percent of goal.

"This was probably the most difficult campaign we have had, due to economic circumstances, but our community has come through," said United Way Board Chairman Stephen Crass. "It is a statement of the care and concern for others in our own community that has brought this about. Our volunteers have worked very hard and have been dedicated to helping our neighbors."

Tuesday's event was held at Life Care Centers of America's Professional Development Center. Life Care Centers of America and its affiliates were very responsible for United Way's exceeding the campaign goal, with the company pledges reaching over \$500,000. That is a record amount pledged by one company in the United Way of Bradley County history.

"Each and every donor makes a difference, from the smallest donation to the largest," said Campaign Co-Chair Dan Cooke. "We want to acknowledge and thank all of the people at Life Care Centers of America and their affiliated companies – Life Care of Cleveland, Garden Plaza, Life Care at Home and Affinity Hospital of Life Care. Their pledge was \$503,174 and they had 64 Pillars level donors."

Along with the special thanks to Life Care Centers of America, other donors and companies were also recognized. Pacesetter and Challenger firms, which conduct early campaigns and report their pledge totals at the United Way campaign kickoff, were honored.

"We had a terrific, fun-filled, kickoff with Coach Pat Summitt where we heard reports from our Pacesetter and Challenger firms," said Campaign Co-Chair Dr. Paul Conn. "They make a real difference in the campaign and their hard work pays off when they give us a beginning total and a boost for the rest of the campaign."

Pacesetter and Challenger firms for the 2009-2010 campaign were: Procter & Gamble/Duracell Brand, Easy Auto, Lee University, Life Care Centers of America, Athens Federal Community Bank, Bank of Cleveland, BB&T Bank, Bradley County Schools, Brenda Lawson & Associates, Cleveland City Schools, Cleveland Utilities, Cormetech, First Tennessee Bank, Manufacturers Chemicals, Peyton's Southeastern, Regions Bank, SkyRidge Medical Center, Southern Heritage Bank, SunTrust Bank, United Community Bank, Whirlpool – Cleveland Division, and Whirlpool Customer eXperience Center.

Dan Cooke and Dr. Paul Conn were just two of four Campaign Co-Chairs. They were joined by their wives – Janey Cooke and Darlia Conn -- not as couples, but as competitors.

"We tried to do something a bit different with our campaign this year by having four Campaign Chairs – two couples," Crass explained. "Instead of it being couple against couple, we split them up and had the men against the women.

"It was an interesting time. These were very competitive people and I'm not sure I would have wanted to be in their homes at certain times during the campaign," he jokingly added.

Teams of divisions were chaired by the men and the women, and when the final pledge totals were complete, the men's team had raised more in pledges in relation to the team goal. Thus, Dan Cooke and Dr. Paul Conn won the "Big Chief" Award.

Darlia Conn related her visits at various agencies during the campaign. She was featured in the United Way video visiting the Signal Center, where she met Rylan Hamby, who was also featured in the United Way campaign brochure and graces the cover of the United Way Annual Report.

"It is amazing to see the good work that is being done in our community by our United Way agencies, and I was so pleased to be able to see that first hand during my visits," she said. "I learned so much by visiting these agencies, and I would urge anyone involved the campaign in the future, as well as companies, that can set up tours to do the same."

Janey Cooke echoed her co-chair's comments.

"Darlia has pinpointed what the campaign is really about. It is about helping people in our community who have special needs and having such a caring community that comes together to help its neighbors," she said. "We are so lucky to live in a community that cares about its people and is willing to contribute in order to help people all year long in a wide range of ways."

Both the men and women also thanked their respective team division chairs.

Serving as division chairs for the Dan Cooke/Paul Conn team were: Mike Bales, Jim Workman, Jay Leggett, Keith Barrett, Michael Estes, Cameron Fisher, Coleman Foss, Lou Patten and Jeff Morelock.

Division chairs for the Janey Cooke/Darlia Conn team were: Bob Borge, Bridgette Bethune, Ricky Sanders, Georgia Gann, Paulette Madson, Barbara Baxter, Dr. Paul Bacon, Britney Cooke, Lindsey Wagner, Melissa Snyder, Donna Simpson, Chuck Rockholt, Johnny Mull, Mike Jenne, Josh Jenne, Jim Sharp and Sue Sharp.

Division 19, called the "Uniquenicks," was chaired by Nancy Casson. It includes Life Care Centers of America and its affiliates and Restaurant Tuesday for United Way contributions.

Also recognized at the Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet were Dr. Charles Hurley, who chaired the Fund Distribution Committee, and Fund Distribution Panel chairs.

"While we are in the process of raising funds there is another large group of volunteers who are reviewing budget requests, visiting agencies, and making recommendations about the use of the dollars raised in the campaign," Crass explained. "I would like to thank Dr. Charles Hurley for his leadership, and the chairs for the Fund Distribution Panels and the panel members, for their diligent work."

Hurley noted it was an interesting year for the allocation process.

"All of the agencies perform worthwhile services but we had to narrow our funding and present a balanced budget," he said. "Even by making the goal, these panels had many serious conversations and they made extremely difficult funding decisions, as we had requests that far exceeded the amount that could be raised in a difficult economy."

Serving as Fund Distribution Panel Chairs were Melody Moses-Alexander, Don Burke, Andrea Davis, Gayle Ellis, Teresa Longwith, Greg Madson, Tanya Mazzolini, Ann McElrath, Nancy Neal and Steve Roberson.

Crass also thanked those involved in the distribution of grants related to the Bradley Memorial Health Endowment Fund. These funds are totally separate from allocations to United Way member agencies.

"For 2009, we awarded our first nine grants and used \$400,000 from the revenue generated by the endowment to provide a wide range of new services," he explained. "Last year, Matt Ryerson worked with the community agencies to produce outstanding grant proposals, based on outcome measurement, and last fall, we awarded 14 new grants for 2010, amounting to over \$400,000, for new programs needed by the community."

Dr. Rodney Fitzgerald chaired this Community Investment Team which reviewed the grant applications.

Fitzgerald and Dr. David Watts will also be developing a Community Needs Assessment for 2010 which will enable United Way to have a better idea of what services are most needed and what the organization can do to help make new services available to meet those needs.

Art Rhodes chaired the United Way's Investment Committee that took the hospital funds and invested the money in efforts to get the best return possible.

"As of Dec. 31, 2009, the market value of the Endowment's assets had grown to \$20,732,959 – an increase in valuation of \$2,855,011 over the previous year-end number, even after the year's allocations of \$400,000 and expenses were drawn down," Rhodes explained. He added the average return for 2009, produced by the three managers working with United Way, was 14.79 percent.

"During last year, the Endowment had earnings of \$796,543 – and of that amount more than \$676,000 will be set aside to make grants to the community for health, wellness and quality of life purposes – and the remainder will be returned to the Endowment to perpetuate its continual growth," he added.

The highlight of the evening Tuesday was the presentation of the William F. Johnson Sr. Community Service Award, which went to United Way of Bradley County supporter Nancy Casson. She is the 38th individual to receive the award.

New Board and Executive Committee members were recognized at Thursday's banquet. Crass turned over the gavel to new Board Chairman Mickey Torbett, who announced that Terry Henry will serve as Chairman-Elect in 2010. Vice Chairmen include Rich Appeldoorn, Mike Bales, Keith Barrett, Nancy Casson, Darlia Conn, Paul Conn, Dan Cooke, Janey Cooke, Carolyn Jackson, Mike Jenne, John Kimball, Chuck Krecklow, Jack Robbins, Cindy Slater, Lee Stewart and Nelson Wooldridge.

Cameron Fisher will serve as Secretary, Art Rhodes as Treasurer and Dr. Charles Hurley as Fund Distribution Chairman.

New additions to the Board of Directors are: Scott Beck, Terry Leonard, Randall Slack, Marty Martin, Mike Baker, Cheryl Dunson, Christy Griffith, Matt Jenne, Stephanie McClendon, DeWayne Morrow and Brian Webb.

Torbett, who thanked Crass for his services as Chairman for the past campaign, said that preparations are already underway for the 2010 campaign, and announcements of campaign chairs, committees and other activities will be announced in the coming weeks.

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