



**United Way
of Bradley County**

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United Way to develop community needs assessment team

In 2008, United Way of Bradley County worked with the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga on a community needs assessment which helped pinpoint specific areas of concern in our local area.

It is now time to do another needs assessment, and United Way officials feel the organization has the ability to conduct this assessment, and possibly have more community involvement in the process.

“As part of the Bradley Memorial Health Endowment Fund agreement, we volunteered to coordinate and participate in a bi-annual community needs assessment,” said Matt Ryerson, Vice President of Community Investment Strategies for United Way of Bradley County.

The Bradley Memorial Health Endowment Fund is a portion of the proceeds of the 2005 sale of Bradley Memorial Hospital which is being managed by United Way of Bradley County. United Way is able to use the income earned from investment of the money the organization received from the sale to provide grants in the community.

During United Way’s first grant year, nine agencies received grants and for 2010, 14 agencies will be funded through the Bradley Memorial Hospital grants, serving thousands of residents in the local community.

Those requesting and those receiving grants have used the previous community needs assessment to justify meeting specific needs in the area.

“The assessments by both universities were very thorough and have been continuously used over the past two years by many community agencies,” Ryerson said, “and we appreciate all the hard work and effort put in by both groups to complete the assessments. Each had a background in providing services to conduct the initial assessment and the manpower to complete the task.

“Through that experience, and after investing these funds back into our community, we believe we have the capacity to perform this needs assessment from our United Way offices, rather than contracting with outside organizations,” he continued. “While the groups from UTC and UTK did a great job completing the assessments, we feel that we can be better stewards of these funds by completing this task internally.”

Ryerson will be pulling together a diverse team of community leaders who will assist in the creation of this process and will participate in the collection of data. The needs assessment data collection will include: the most recent local demographic information, an inventory of existing community programs, population surveys, focus groups and individual interviews. United Way of Bradley County will compile this information and put it into a reader-friendly document with a list of community priorities.

“We hope to create an objective report on the needs of Bradley County as they relate to health, wellness and quality of life that can serve as a guiding document for funding priorities and social service programs for the next few years,” Ryerson stated.

The goal is to have a complete report available to the community by the end of 2010.

“This is a massive undertaking, but we believe that with the help of local leadership and a strong base of volunteers, United Way of Bradley County has the capacity to accomplish this task,” Ryerson added.

For more information about the bi-annual needs assessment, or how you can volunteer to help in the process, contact Matt Ryerson at the United Way of Bradley County offices at 472-9876 or by email at mryerson@unitedwaybc.com.