

United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2009

#1 Q. What is the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties?

A. United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties is a local not-for-profit organization that brings people, health and human service agencies, government agencies, and community groups together to focus resources on the most critical human care needs in our area. As a facilitator, convener, collaborator, and leader in addressing health and human service issues, the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties mobilizes the caring power of our community to improve the lives of our friends, family members, and neighbors who are in need.

#2 Q. Who runs the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties?

A. A volunteer Board of Directors comprised of over 50 local community leaders governs the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties. Board members represent the diversity and interests of our community. Ten full-time and two part-time staff are employed by United Way to manage the organization, raise funds, and provide services in our community, including bringing the community together to identify community priorities, developing solutions to pressing needs, and coordinating efforts to deliver services efficiently.

#3 Q. How did United Way select the programs it is currently funding?

A. Members of the Community Solutions Committee of the United Way Board reviewed the performance of programs and measured them against the Community Solutions Plan priorities selected in last year's two-year funding process. They also took into consideration the amount available as a result of the 2008-2009 Campaign and then made recommendations to the United Way Board. The United Way Board of Directors made the final determination on how much funding each program received during the May 2009 Board Meeting.

#4 Q. In 2008-2009, United Way raised over \$4.3 million and distributed \$3.3 million. Where do the funds that are not distributed go?

A. These funds go to 4 areas:

1. Uncollectible pledges are less than 6%.
2. Fundraising and community education costs are 10% or less.
3. Administrative costs are 7% or less.
4. The rest goes to services provided by United Way, such as facilitating the development and implementation of Community Solutions and the Our Babies Can't Wait initiative, providing oversight and coordination of 2-1-1, serving as administrator of the Emergency Food and Shelter program, community needs assessment and planning, etc.

Twenty percent of gifts designated to specific agencies are withheld in order to share these costs.

#5 Q. Why is United Way a better choice than giving directly to an agency?

A. There are several reasons why supporting United Way is the best way to help the most people in our community. These reasons include:

- United Way takes the guesswork out of giving. Donors do not have to choose where to direct their donations because United Way does the important homework for them. United Way supports programs across the spectrum of human care issues based on how effectively they meet specifically identified community needs.
- Community volunteers carefully review each United Way funded program on an annual basis. Their oversight ensures agencies adhere to sound fiscal policies and that contributions are invested in programs that do the most good.
- Giving through United Way reduces costly and time-consuming fundraising efforts for the agencies providing programs. This enables them to better spend their time helping people.
- When donors give through their workplace campaign, gifts can be spread out over the course of a year through payroll deduction, making it easier to support the human care needs of our community.

- When donors give to the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties, their gifts are invested with the contributions of others to help provide a continuum of care for those most in need. Even if donors designate a portion of their gift to a specific service or agency, they are asked to consider investing part of their gift to the United Way Community Solutions Fund. This enables donors to partner with United Way in improving the lives of our families, friends, and neighbors. The bottom line is that gifts to United Way stay local and gets result.

#6 Q. What safeguards are in place to ensure accountability for United Way funds?

A. Our Board of Directors has established policies that safeguard the investment you make in United Way. Each year, our United Way undergoes a thorough independent financial audit. The structure of our organization also provides for volunteer committees to oversee our business practices and operations on an ongoing basis.

#7 Q. What is Community Solutions?

A. Community Solutions embraces the big picture in tackling human service needs. It brings all the players to the table. It identifies a collective community vision that prioritizes the most important community needs. It makes measurable headway in addressing our human service problems.

#8 Q. Why is United Way doing Community Solutions?

A. For the past 52 years, our United Way has been very successful in raising funds to support a variety of health and human services in our area. However, our community has changed and our needs have become more complex over the years. The 2004 Community Needs Assessment conducted by Washington State University Tri-Cities revealed that our community has an urgent need for more coordination and collaboration in the way we deliver human services. United Way was asked by community leaders, donors, and the Three Rivers Community Roundtable to take a leadership role in creating greater effectiveness in our human service delivery system.

#9 Q. How is United Way solving community problems?

A. Since 2006, United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties has convened over 200 community leaders to discuss ways the community can work more efficiently in delivering human services to our local community. The group agreed on essential elements that need to be in place in order to achieve excellence in the human service delivery system and endorsed United Way as the facilitator to move the process forward. These community leaders have been diligent in creating lasting changes in community conditions and people's lives. Their hard work has resulted in the first-ever community-wide health and human services plan and the first initiative called "Our Babies Can't Wait." Businesses, organizations and individual volunteers are enthusiastically supportive of this initiative as well as hundreds of local parents who have benefitted. While continuing their work on the Our Babies Can't Wait Initiative, Community Solutions Team Members and Blue Ribbon Advisors are now working on identifying additional ways to build a better community through the next Community Solutions Initiative.

#10 Q. How will Community Solutions affect United Way's investment and funding process?

A. Since 2008, United Way has aligned its funding priorities with the key focus areas of the Community Solutions Plan created by over 200 community leaders. For the first time in many years, United Way pursued an open application process to ensure that United Way funded programs will deliver the best outcomes possible. United Way funded service providers have been involved with the design of this process. As a result of this new investment and funding process, a total of 49 programs operated by 22 agencies have been awarded United Way funding, providing services in the areas of education, health, safety and self-sufficiency.

If additional information is needed, visit www.unitedway-bfco.com or email [Becky Gauthier, Director of Community Solutions, at bgauthier@unitedway-bfco.com](mailto:Bgauthier@unitedway-bfco.com).