



United Way  
of Benton and Franklin Counties

## Frequently Asked Questions – February 2012

### **What is the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties?**

United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties is a local not-for-profit organization that is improving lives in our community. This is done through Community Solutions which focuses our work on four areas of need: education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency. A key component of this is United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties' facilitation of two community initiatives called Our Babies Can't Wait and Prepared by 20.

Simply put, United Way, in conjunction with the community, determines local, critical needs, engages the community to address those needs, and creates local partnerships to improve lives.

### **What is Community Solutions?**

After a study done by Washington State University Tri-Cities revealed that Benton and Franklin Counties had an urgent need for more coordination and collaboration in the way we deliver human services; we took the lead in moving forward. United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties brought hundreds of leaders together within our community to narrow the focus of the most pressing needs and started making a plan for how those needs would be addressed. Through Community Solutions and the collaboration of hundreds of community members from across Benton and Franklin Counties, four areas of need were determined to be the focus of our work. They are education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency. In all that we do, our emphasis is within these four areas.

Community Solutions was developed to determine the greatest needs in Benton and Franklin Counties, and it brings together the necessary leaders, service providers, and community members to facilitate the creation and implementation of solutions to address those needs. By prioritizing community needs, a unified vision for direction can be achieved.

### **Who runs the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties?**

A volunteer Board of Directors comprised of more than 50 local community leaders governs the United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties. Board members represent the diversity and interests of our community. A highly qualified staff is 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.

### **How did United Way select the programs it is currently funding?**

Every two years, United Way pursues a competitive process to identify programs that are aligned with Community Solutions priorities and can bring about the best results for residents in Benton and Franklin Counties. United Way Board Members participate in the review and rating of the applications. Applications are evaluated in several predetermined areas: organizational governance, financial accountability, program design and responsiveness, cost effectiveness and relevant experience. The United Way Board of Directors makes the final determination on how much funding each program receives. A total of 39 programs provided by 22 agencies were awarded funding through the 2011-2012 United Way Investment and Funding Process, providing services in education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency.

## **How is United Way solving community problems?**

In all that we do, our emphasis is within the four focus areas of education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency. We continually keep our work focused towards programs and services that are addressing the most pressing needs in our community. Once a program has been selected for funding, based on alignment with Community Solutions goals, program administrators are held to strict guidelines about services provided and reporting successes within their program(s). United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties ensures community donations are used wisely and are having the most impact by working closely with program providers and reporting that impact back to the community.

## **During the 2010 Campaign, United Way raised more than \$4.5 million and distributed \$3.75 million. Where do the rest of the dollars go?**

These funds go to 4 areas:

1. Uncollectible pledge loss
2. Fundraising costs
3. Administrative costs
4. The remainder went to services provided by United Way, such as facilitating the development and implementation of Community Solutions; Our Babies Can't Wait and Prepared by 20 initiatives; providing oversight and coordination of 2-1-1; handling the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program; community needs assessment, and planning.

## **What is the Cornerstone Program?**

The Cornerstone Program was established to secure funding from businesses to cover United of Benton and Franklin Counties' overhead costs so that, ultimately, 100% of all individual donor contributions will be available for local services and programs.

## **Why is United Way a better choice than giving directly to an agency?**

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 and achieve long-term outcomes identified in the Community Solutions Plan.
- Performance by United Way funded programs is reviewed bi-annually. This 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 address the greatest community needs. 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 get results.

## **What safeguards are in place to ensure accountability for United Way funds?**

The Board of Directors has established policies that safeguard the investments that donors make to United Way. Each year, United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties undergoes a thorough independent financial audit. The structure of the organization also provides for volunteer committees to oversee business practices and operations on an ongoing basis.

**How late can I make a contribution to United Way and receive a tax deduction for the current year?**

- Donations made by credit card must be received by 10 a.m. in the United Way Office on the last working day of December.
- Donations made by check and submitted by U.S. mail must be postmarked by December 31. Due to postal delays experienced during the holiday season, we encourage donors to mail gifts several days in advance.
- Gifts made through donation of stock must be received by the United Way Office by the last working day of December.

**Will I receive a tax receipt letter for my prior year donations?**

- United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties routinely provides documentation for tax purposes to all donors who contribute at least \$250 via cash, check, credit card, or stock gifts. Donors can expect tax receipts to be mailed by U.S. mail no later than January 31.
- For contributions of cash, check, credit card, or stock gifts less than \$250, a tax receipt may be requested by sending an email to [unitedway@unitedway-bfco.com](mailto:unitedway@unitedway-bfco.com). Please provide name, address, and phone number.
- For contributions made through payroll deduction, the IRS requires that gifts be documented through earnings statement(s) provided by employers along with a copy of pledge cards that contains the following wording: "No goods or services were received in return for this gift."