

REACH OUT A HAND – MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

As a United Way Volunteer and the 2009 Campaign Chair for United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area, I am very excited to be given the great opportunity to assist in bringing people together to make a positive impact on our region. When asked to serve as this year's chair, there was no hesitation: I wanted to make a difference for the entire community. Being part of the United Way team, we have the ability to meet the multiple challenges faced by this region. The spirit of giving in this area is second to none and compared with United Ways across the nation we are in the top 5% for per capita giving. This is something of which we can all be proud.

Quality of life in our community depends on good health, strong education, and economic self-sufficiency. These are the building blocks for a healthy community. To achieve these goals, however, United Way needs to raise the necessary funds. This year with considerable input from the community, we have set a goal of \$3.25 million dollars. Although this is a great challenge for us in times of financial constraints, we can do this and we will exceed our expectations. This campaign is everyone's campaign and in the end we lift up those who need a helping hand. Your contribution this year will make our way of living in the Mohawk Valley a more vital and prosperous one for all.

Just to give you an idea of how valuable your donations are this is a snapshot of how the money you pledge can be spent:

- \$2 a week over the course of a year can feed 80 people at the soup kitchen.
- \$2 a week can give eight hours of counseling to an abused or neglected child.
- \$2 a week can give four people the opportunity to be involved in the YWCA therapeutic swim program.

That is about the cost of a cup of coffee, and for that small amount you really can change lives right here in your community.

I thank those of you who have continually supported our community through this wonderful organization. It is because of you that United Way has been able to work with their partners and support critical services and programs in our community. I extend an invitation to those who have not been a part of the team to come join us and see the differences we can make.

Having had the opportunity to visit a number of programs United Way supports, I have seen the dollars at work and it is most impressive. The privilege of serving as an Allocation Panel volunteer to assist in making tough decisions about where donors' dollars are invested has made me so very much aware of the needs we

have in our community. The Allocation Panel comprised of community volunteers, like you and me provide oversight and review each of the programs requesting funds for positive, measurable results.

Join me along with thousands of your neighbors and friends this year, and contribute through workplace campaigns, by pledging online at www.unitedwaygu.org, or calling 733-4691. Help lift our community up by advocating, volunteering and contributing. United, we all have opportunity this year to come together and make a difference by creating positive change in our community.

John Hobika, Jr., from M&T Bank, is the 2009 Campaign Chair of the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area.