



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*There are questions you may encounter, and if handled well, these can be great opportunities for providing information about United Way and helping our Resource Development Campaign. People are usually willing to participate in a campaign when they have the information they want, so please review these helpful notes and share these answers as questions arise.*

## WHAT DOES UNITED WAY DO?

**ANSWER:** United Way of the Mid-South is helping more people escape generational poverty by making strategic investments in our community and improving people's lives. We're creating lasting, community-level changes to help local individuals and families enjoy a better quality of life. Our strategies include leading cross-sector collaborations, advocacy for public policy changes, and funding direct services and programs provided by human service partner agencies.

## WHERE DOES UNITED WAY FOCUS?

**ANSWER:** We're leading the fight against poverty and Driving The Dream to help more people escape generational poverty so they can live the life of their dreams. Our network is creating improvements for people's quality of life through stronger education, financial stability, and health for everyone in our community. We work collaboratively to ensure that children succeed in school, individuals lead healthy lives, and everyone has the opportunity to achieve financial well-being.

- Children are more likely to graduate from high school if they enter school ready to succeed.
- Communities are strengthened when people's basic needs are met, and they have the resources they need to secure affordable housing and a stable income.
- Access to needed healthcare services helps children, adults, and families thrive in school, at work, and at home.

## WHY IS UNITED WAY THE BEST WAY TO MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

**ANSWER:** United Way has the scope, expertise, and influence to bring together hundreds of human service agencies, government, businesses, private foundations, and dedicated volunteers around a common vision of creating maximum impact and achieving long-lasting results.

- We identify, understand, and prioritize ongoing and emerging human service needs.
- We recruit the people and organizations who bring the passion, expertise, and resources needed to get things done.
- We are trusted by our partners and the community because we ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability in our work.

## WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO UNITED WAY?

**ANSWER:** Your gift makes an impact on our single most significant issue: local poverty. It supports hundreds of vital services available to people in the Mid-South. To ensure that your money is well-spent for the most critical needs in our community – like poverty, hunger, drug abuse and specialized child care – teams of knowledgeable volunteers who live and work in the Mid-South make decisions on where the money is spent to help the most people in need.

## HOW DOES UNITED WAY DEMONSTRATE ITS ACCOUNTABILITY?

**ANSWER:** With the help of hundreds of volunteers, United Way of the Mid-South can keep administrative and fundraising costs to less than 17%, which is among the lowest of local, state or national charitable organizations.

## CAN I GET HELP FROM A UNITED WAY AGENCY? CAN ANYONE?

**ANSWER:** Yes. The vital services provided by agencies are available to everyone without regard to economic status, race, or religion. In some rare cases, services may be limited based on government-imposed eligibility requirements.

## DO UNITED WAY AGENCIES CHARGE FEES FOR THEIR SERVICES?

**ANSWER:** Some do, and some don't. Those who do charge generally base their charges on the individual's ability to pay, and that sum is usually far below actual costs.

## WHO DECIDES WHO GETS THE UNITED WAY CONTRIBUTIONS?

**ANSWER:** Trained Volunteers. Every year these volunteers make the tough decisions – decisions that touch thousands of lives and involve millions of dollars. They visit agencies, review budgets and make sure every dollar goes where it is needed most. For those who want to give directly to a nonprofit organization, a donor designation option is available.

## WHY NOT JUST GIVE DIRECTLY TO THE AGENCIES?

**ANSWER:** There are several reasons why United Way is among the best ways to give to charity:

- United Way's community-based oversight assures donors that the charities you support through United Way adhere to sound fiscal policies and provide needed services.
- Giving through United Way reduces costly and time-consuming fundraising efforts for agencies, so their time can be spent helping others.
- Giving through United Way supports a network of agencies that work together in our battle against Mid-South poverty.
- Most companies offer payroll deduction to divide your gift into smaller donations.

## HOW ARE UNITED WAY AGENCIES ACCOUNTABLE TO UNITED WAY DONORS?

**ANSWER:** Every United Way agency meets these high standards to assure you of quality and efficiency:

- Recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.
- Governed by a volunteer board of directors.
- Provides for a human care need.
- Audited regularly by an independent CPA firm.

- Submits annual financial statements.
- Presents and defends their organization's budget to a panel of community volunteers every year.
- Operates at a reasonable cost. Experienced community volunteers oversee the distributions to all agencies, review financial reports and annual audits, conduct on-site visits and monitor programs to assure quality.

### DO THE AGENCIES GET GOVERNMENT FUNDING?

**ANSWER:** Many agencies receive government support, primarily through grants. In fact, United Way funding is often used by agencies to generate matching government funds with agency resources. However, shrinking government dollars available to agencies can threaten their financial stability, which means that privately funded sources like United Way are more important than ever.

### WHY DOES UNITED WAY SUPPORT SOME AGENCIES THAT ARE AFFILIATED WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS?

**ANSWER:** United Way supports agencies because they provide services to people who need them and create meaningful results in our battle against poverty. The agencies affiliated with religious groups provide services to all people, regardless of religious affiliation. United Way of the Mid-South recognizes the rights of all people and does not, in any way, discriminate against any person or organization because of race, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, socioeconomic status, political preference or lifestyle. In all of our funding policies and employment practices, we strive to be both fair and equitable.

### DOESN'T CHARITY BEGIN AT HOME?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it does. "Home" is not only the place where we reside – it is the community that surrounds us, and the people that make up that community. Working together works for the betterment of everyone.

### WHAT IF MY SPOUSE GIVES FOR ME?

**ANSWER:** Family finances and giving are very personal matters. Each decides if he or she wants to help by being personally involved. More people can be helped if more people give.

### IF I GIVE TO MY CHURCH, WHY DO I NEED TO GIVE TO UNITED WAY?

**ANSWER:** Most people who give to charity also give to their church, synagogue or house of worship. Studies have shown that people who participate in faith-based worship on a regular basis also give more to charity and are more likely to volunteer. The programs supported by United Way have widespread impact and touch thousands of people - including many people of faith - in a variety of ways.

### HOW DO I KNOW MY GIFT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

**ANSWER:** United Way volunteers focus on community needs and program results when making funding decisions. You can serve on a volunteer committee to decide how to best distribute the funds raised. An interesting thing happens when the people who give money are also in charge of determining the best funding uses for it – they work hard to make the right decisions! Call United Way of the Mid-South at 901-433-4300 if you are interested in serving as an allocations volunteer.

### I KNOW SOMEONE WHO ASKED FOR HELP AND DIDN'T GET IT – WHAT'S GOING ON?

**ANSWER:** United Way is not a direct service provider. We help make sure that programs throughout the community have the resources they need to serve people and address challenges. Needs always exceed the dollars available to meet them, so, unfortunately, some people don't get the help they may desperately need. United Way agencies served thousands of people in the Mid-South last year. If more people give, waiting lists can be reduced, and programs can be expanded to serve more people with agency resources. However, shrinking government dollars available to agencies can threaten their financial stability, which means that privately funded sources like United Way are more important than ever.

### DOES THE MONEY STAY LOCAL?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Unless you choose to designate your gift to a particular focus area, county, or other agency, your funds will be invested in the Community Impact Fund in the county of your employment. Many local volunteers in your community work with United Way staff to determine the most effective way to deploy these resources.

### HOW CAN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?

When we LIVE UNITED, whatever the problem facing our community, we can create real change.

- GIVE** – Invest in the best way to make the biggest difference.
- ADVOCATE** – Be informed and speak out on issues that matter to you.
- VOLUNTEER** – Put your talents to work
- ENGAGE** – Join others to bring positive change.

# REMEMBER

*Answering questions courteously, quickly, and thoroughly can make the difference between building trust with a donor or losing a donation and possibly starting incorrect rumors.*