

# Volunteers aid United Way agencies

Local businesses free up workers to take part in annual Day of Action

By Dann Denny  
331-4350 | [ddenny@heraldt.com](mailto:ddenny@heraldt.com)  
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Amanda Brown is a dog lover, so deciding where to volunteer during Wednesday's 2009 United Way Day of Action was a no-brainer.

Brown, along with two other volunteers, spent the morning painting the check-in room at the Bloomington Animal Shelter.

"I love dogs," Brown said. "I have two of them at home — Suzie, a pit bull mix, and Chloe, a beagle."

Helping Brown cover the room with a coat of pale blue paint was Nancy Wahl, another fan of four-legged furballs.

She and Brown both work for Transitional Services Inc., part of the Indiana Mentor Network, providing developmentally disabled individuals with supported living and group homes.

"I love the animals here and want to help them get adopted," she said. "Maybe if this room looks nicer, it will help more animals find homes."

Wahl and Brown were two of 134 volunteers — 90 from Monroe Bank — who took part in Wednesday's all-day event, doing projects at 15 nonprofit organizations.

Volunteers cleaned and painted at Amethyst House, washed windows and filled goody bags at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monroe County, and packed boxes and moved furniture at Monroe County United Ministries.

"These Day of Action activities connect generous volunteers with area organizations to accomplish vital projects that increase efficiency and productivity," said Barry Lessow, United Way's executive director. "Especially during this challenging year, the agencies are grateful for this boost."

Kathy Obrakta, the animal shelter's volunteer program director, said the check-in room is where new animals receive vaccinations and treatment.

"We plan to remodel the entire room, so this painting project gives a great start," she said. "Our staff is busy all the time taking care of animals, so these volunteers are really helping us."

Lee Ann Jourdan, executive director of Girls Inc., said the three volunteers who helped the agency get its annual fundraiser mailing out and clean up its membership database saved staff members tons of time.

Carri Engledow, a volunteer from Target, said the day not only allowed her to help Girls Inc., but enabled her to get to know one of her fellow volunteers from Target, Megan Lewis.

"Megan works the overnight shift and I work the day shift," she said. "Today we've gotten to know each other. She's a fun person."

At the Hoosier Hills Food Bank, volunteer coordinator Kim Kanney said the five volunteers packing 600 boxes of groceries for low-income seniors were a godsend. "Without help, our staff would have to work overtime to do this job," he said.

This year, for the first time since the day was created 14 years ago, some volunteers read to preschool children at MCUM and the Rise, a transitional housing facility run by Middle Way House. They also gave 110 books, provided by United Way of Monroe County, to the children enrolled at MCUM and the Rise.

Jennifer Hottell, United Way's communications director, said the reading efforts are part of the United Way Born Learning early childhood education initiative.

Volunteers and those from the host agencies gathered at the United Way to enjoy a picnic-style lunch, complete with gift cards and other items donated by local businesses.

## Who and where

Volunteers for the Day of Action came from Monroe Bank, TSI/The Mentor Network, Indiana University Office of Service-Learning, Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Target.

They volunteered at the American Red Cross, Amethyst House, Area 10 Agency on Aging, Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana, Boys and Girls Clubs, City of Bloomington-Animal Care, Family Service Association, Girls Inc., Hoosier Hills Food Bank, Middle Way House-the Rise, Monroe County United Ministries, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, Shalom Community Center, Stone Belt Arc, and Sycamore Land Trust.

Megan Lewis, left, and Carri Engledow, volunteers who work at Target, help prepare Girls Inc. fund-raising materials for mailing Wednesday as part of the 2009 United Way Day of Action. See a free video from the day's activities at [HeraldTimesOnline.com/media](http://HeraldTimesOnline.com/media).  
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