

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**United Way
of Monroe County**

United Way Sets Goals with 2011-2012 Campaign Kick-Off

Bloomington, Ind. – United Way of Monroe County began the 2011-2012 “Transform Lives. Create Opportunity.” fundraising campaign with a successful kick-off event Friday, September 16th. Held at the Henke Hall of Champions in the IU Memorial Stadium, the luncheon was sponsored by Indiana University. The keynote speaker for the event was IU Men’s Head Basketball Coach Tom Crean. Other speakers included:

- Barry Lessow, United Way Executive Director
- Heidi Schulz, IU Hutton Honors College, UWMC Campaign Chair
- Kevin Osborne, IU Credit Union, UWMC Board Vice President

Campaign leaders announced a fundraising goal of \$1,410,000. Last year, the campaign raised \$1,400,137. The board set a goal that recognizes current economic pressures, with the hopes that donors will be generous so United Way can help people who are in significant distress.

Funds raised during the campaign will support vital programs throughout the coming year. United Way supports partnership initiatives and member agencies that work toward specific goals in the areas of education, earnings, and essentials. By focusing on the building blocks for a better life, United Way creates sustainable solutions to the most pressing issues in our community and ensures that families who need assistance can address the underlying issues they face.

United Way Executive Director Barry Lessow remarked, “United Way’s three goals -- education, earnings and essentials -- all tie together in ways that we see on a community level, an agency level, and a very personal level. Our goal is for everyone in this community to be successful.”

Lessow thanked donors for being vital partners in achieving these goals. “Because of your support, United Way and our 25 member agencies can put energy and resources into programs and strategies that ensure children, youth, and adults achieve their potential by making sure children graduate from school, families move and remain out of poverty, and everyone in our community has the essentials for life and career: food, housing, health care, and emergency services.

Campaign Chair Heidi Schulz spoke of the importance of the services provided by member agencies and how they benefit members of the community. Schulz emphasized that these agencies need United Way support to accomplish their missions. Schulz said, “United Way hears reports every day from member agencies that the need is increasing. Demand for food, low-cost childcare, after-school services, health care, and just about everything else we fund is increasing.”

Board Vice President Kevin Osborne reaffirmed the importance of the support needed to be successful. “United Way is our chance, as a community, to fulfill the vision we have for our families. We know the way to a strong community is to improve the lives of the people who live here. That is why your support is so important if people are to be successful.”

Several positive outcomes were reported. In 2010, all of the high-school seniors in United Way funded programs successfully graduated from school. This year, 46% more low- to moderate-income people were able to file their taxes through the Free Community Tax Service. All 182 families that received rent and mortgage assistance through Salvation Army were able to avoid eviction from their homes.

Keynote speaker IU Men’s Basketball Coach Tom Crean reinforced taking action and creating opportunity in our community. “Our number one responsibility on this is earth is to help others. Begin with the end in mind...Follow the United Way’s lead... Get up there and make a difference. You never know the impact you’re going to have on one to 100 to 1000.”

Crean continued, “How can I bring something to this person? How can I bring some awareness, some guidance? How can I team up with this group of people? How can I be a part of this? And when we start thinking in those terms, this world gets better. This community gets better. Monetarily when we donate, we give more tools to those people who have made this work their life’s calling.”

United Way is excited to welcome eight Loaned Executives to the fundraising Campaign team: Jeff Baldwin, Boys & Girls Clubs; Fern Bonchek, PALS; Julia Karr, General Electric; Dayleen Ragains, German American Bancorp; Tony Rastall, Old National Bank; Ilene Schaeffer, Fifth Third Bank; Elizabeth Thompson, Volunteers in Medicine; and Kelli Wesley, IU Health. On 'loan' from their employers, these eight volunteers will spend time each week during the campaign calling new workplaces, making visits, presenting information, and bringing back results.

Those who wish to join United Way in making a lasting impact on our community can visit United Way's web site at www.monroeunitedway.org and securely donate online via PayPal or credit card. Donors can also download a pledge card and contribute in the form of cash, check, credit card, automatic bank withdrawal, stocks and securities, or can choose to be billed. Those participating in workplace campaigns can contribute via payroll deduction. Any company interested in having a workplace campaign or any group that would like a presentation about United Way or our member agencies is encouraged to call Resource Development Director Lori Garraghty at lori@monroeunitedway.org or 812-334-8370.

United Way of Monroe County is a nonprofit organization that improves people's lives by addressing critical needs today and working to reduce those needs tomorrow. Through its Community Action Fund and grant opportunities, United Way works with 25 member agencies and community partners to focus resources on the building blocks for a better life: education, earnings, and the essentials. You can find more information at www.monroeunitedway.org.

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