

HeraldTimesOnline.com

United Way kicks off \$1.375 million drive

'There's such a great need,' campaign chairwoman Judy Sharp reminds group

By Chris Fyall
September 19, 2009

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Times are tough, officials with the United Way of Monroe County acknowledged Friday. Needs are still great, they said.

The message at a kick-off luncheon for United Way of Monroe County's 2009-10 fundraising campaign was simple: You can help.

United Way officials asked donors to raise \$1,375,000 in the next year.

Donors will have to stretch a wee bit farther than they did last year, when the campaign collected \$1,355,000.

"There's such a great need," said Judy Sharp, the 2009-2010 campaign chairwoman and the Monroe County assessor. "We've got to do it."

This year's target splits the difference between last year's goal, which was \$1.4 million, and last year's collections. The goal is ambitious, Sharp said.

"Our challenge is to get more people involved and to get current donors to dig a little deeper," she said.

United Way of Monroe County works with a network of community partners and 25 member agencies to offer comprehensive and collaborative solutions to help local residents improve their lives, said Barry Lessow, the chapter's executive director.

The campaign will "help us build the resources we will use throughout the year to improve people's lives," he said. "People having the building blocks for success ripples out in some very direct and very subtle ways to the entire community."

Meeting the goal will require the entire community, said MaryFrances McCourt, treasurer at Indiana University and the school's United Way campaign co-chairwoman. Money is tight everywhere, including on campus, where salaries have been flat due to budget problems, she said.

"We still thought, given the times, we would try to do more," McCourt said. "It takes everyone in the community — on campus and off — to make this community strong."

The chapter is getting some help from the Lilly Endowment and the Indiana Association of United Ways, which together will match some new and large donations, said Lori Garraghty, the chapter's resource development director.

IU basketball coach Tom Crean was supposed to be the keynote speaker at the luncheon. Crean cancelled earlier this week.

His replacement, Tony Armstrong, is the president and CEO of IU's Research and Technology Corp., which helps manage the intellectual capital that emerges from IU.

The United Way's efforts to strengthen Bloomington matter, he said.

"We really appreciate the work you're doing," Armstrong said. "It's probably never been more important than it is right now."

