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Call to support the United Way of Monroe County

Annual fundraising campaign goal of \$1.4 million the same as last year

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Indiana University baseball's head coach Tracy Smith told a crowd of 150 people that when IU fell short of its fundraising goal for the United Way of Monroe County's annual campaign last year, it stoked his competitive fires.

"In my world, that's a loss," said Smith, speaking in the Henke Hall of Champions Friday during the United Way of Monroe County's 2012-13 campaign kickoff. "So just like an athletic team that suffers a loss, we now need to regroup to make sure we hit our goal this year."

Smith was referring to the \$804,981 that IU raised for the campaign last year, about \$45,000 less than its goal.

"This year we need to step outside our comfort zone and encourage others to give," Smith said, referring to IU's 2012-13 goal of \$850,000, the same as last year's. "Be persistent. Be passionate. People need to be reminded that we're all part of something bigger than ourselves."

Heidi Schultz, this year's United Way campaign chairwoman, announced the countywide 2012-13 campaign goal is \$1,410,000, the same as the goal last year, when the final total of \$1,400,198 fell about \$10,000 short.

"I'm confident that, together, we can do it," she said.

Smith said that while he and his wife have been financial supporters of the United Way for many years, he recently visited several of the United Way's 24 partner agencies to get a better look at what they do. He learned, for example, how the Hoosier Hills Food Bank collects and distributes food, and that it relies on a volunteer army of more than 3,000 people to keep it running.

He visited the Area 10 Agency on Aging, where he learned that the agency's Rural Transit vehicles provide people with more than 200,000 free rides a year. The agency also offers affordable housing to seniors and runs the Senior Games. He said one of the best athletes in this year's Senior Games will be a 100-year-old woman.

"I want to go see her compete," he said. "I might even recruit her."

Smith said he heard from the agencies that while United Way funds are crucial, "the collaboration among agencies is an invaluable part of the network created by United Way. In that short time, I got to see the real results, the real impact and the real need for our support."

Barry Lessow, United Way's executive director, said funds raised during the campaign will support vital programs throughout the coming year, adding that United Way works with member agencies and community partners to bring lasting change and improve people's lives.

"United Way's three focus areas — education, earnings and essentials — are a simple, but proven, formula for success," he said. "I believe our community wants people to have those building blocks of opportunity. It does our community no good when kids show up at kindergarten not able to recognize the letter 'A' or drop out of school at age 16; or adults are told they can't work because they have a disability; or women ignore that lump; or seniors ration their heart pills."

Lessow reported that in 2011, all of the high school seniors in United Way-funded mentoring programs successfully graduated from school, and Monroe and Owen county households saved \$68,839 on prescription drug costs through the United Way FamilyWise discount prescription drug card. He said this spring Free Community Tax Service volunteers helped low- and moderate-income people file 2,680 tax returns.

How to give

If you want to help this year's campaign, which supports such agencies as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bloomington, LifeDesigns, Salvation Army and Stone Belt, you can visit United Way's website at www.monroeunitedway.org and securely donate online via credit card. Donors can also download pledge cards 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 their member agencies is encouraged to contact resource development director Lori Garraghty at lori@monroeunitedway.org or 812-334-8370.



Barry Lessow, executive director of United Way of Monroe County, talks with Mark Moore, CEO of IU Health Bloomington Hospital, at the kickoff luncheon for the new United Way fundraising campaign. Watch a video of the United Way kickoff by using the free HTLivepage app on your smartphone or tablet, or view it at HeraldTimesOnline.com/video. David Snodgress | Herald-Times



Tracy Smith, IU baseball coach, delivers his keynote speech Friday at the United Way campaign kickoff luncheon. David Snodgress | Herald-Times



Barry Lessow, executive director of United Way of Monroe County. David Snodgrass | Herald-Times

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