

United Way of Monroe County begins fundraising campaign

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The United Way of Monroe County aims to raise \$1.3 million in the next year.

At the United Way Campaign Kick-Off Luncheon on Wednesday, more than 120 business people, volunteers and IU representatives gathered in Memorial Stadium's Henke Hall of Champions to hear why they should donate to the organization.

The tables were dressed in United Way's blue and orange. The music was light jazz, and the food was lemon leek chicken breast with a roasted vegetable medley and wild rice pilaf. The topics of the speakers were hunger, poverty and education.

"A donation to United Way touches one in three lives in the community," Community Engagement Director Jennifer Hottell said.

Donations to United Way remain in the community, Hottell said.

The United Way allocates grants to 25 agencies in Monroe County, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girls Inc. of Monroe County and the Boys and Girls Club.

The organization also supports the Monroe County Community School Corporation's School Assistance Fund, which provides clothing and school supplies to students in Monroe County schools.

In her address to the crowd, volunteer and Board President Heidi Schulz shared the story of a second grader who was having some trouble at school.

The second grader was in foster care and the school social worker noticed she was becoming more withdrawn. The girl was having trouble reading, and she could not see the board. She had amblyopia — one of her eyes wandered.

The School Assistance Fund covered the cost of her eye exams and glasses, and the girl could see better at school.

"Why am I a volunteer? Because I know I am making a difference in the community," Schulz said.

Although the economic value of hope and optimism is immeasurable, the United Way's economic effect can be measured when it helps a family understand an eviction notice or a senior put in a ramp so she can remain in her home, Executive Director Barry Lessow said.

He said United Way puts the resources and people in place to care for people who have immediate needs.

“I hope you want to see that impact,” Lessow told the crowd, urging them to fill out their donation cards. “We want to work with you to create the town you want to live in. Now we just need you to spread that word to others,” Lessow said.