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## United Way begins 2013-14 fundraising

By Brianna Meyer | IDS | September 29, 2013

United Way of Monroe County began its 2013-14 fundraising campaign at Memorial Stadium on Friday.

The organization set a goal to raise \$1,425,000. Last year, the group exceeded its fundraising goal, raising \$1,416,194.

More than 140 volunteers and community leaders gathered in the Henke Hall of Champions for a luncheon to learn about the campaign's goals and strategies.

The theme of the campaign, "Give Today. Create a Better Tomorrow," is meant to encourage donors to invest in the community's future by supporting social services.

The money raised will go to the Community Action Fund, which helps United Way's 24 member agencies improve the community in three categories — education, earnings and essentials.

Heidi Schulz, United Way of Monroe County board member and leader of the campaign, said demand for the three Es is increasing, and state and federal funding for social services is unstable.

"United Way hears reports every day from member agencies that the need is increasing," Schulz said. "Demand for food, low-cost childcare, after-school services, health care and just about everything else we fund is increasing."

Keynote Speaker Dan Smith, president and CEO of the IU Foundation, offered fundraising tips to community leaders and volunteers.

"You're not asking for money, you're asking to change people's lives," he said.

United Way of Monroe County Executive Director Barry Lessow said he hopes some day the demand for services United Way provides will decrease, and only then can he declare victory.

Lessow asked attendees to donate to United Way.

The donations that United Way receives help to make a "measurable, sustained difference in the community," Schulz said.

United Way shared statistics from its member agencies' programs to show the difference they are making.

Patients at Volunteers in Medicine received 11,202 prescriptions at no cost, the Free Community Tax Service program assisted low and moderate-income residents file 2,901 federal returns, and of high school seniors enrolled in mentoring programs at United Way member agencies, 94 percent graduated.

Smith also said there is no such thing as a small gift.

"A dollar eighty buys breakfast for a child, but it also buys four extra hours of attention in class, better grades and a better chance to graduate to become a constructive member of the community," Smith said.

*Follow reporter Brianna Meyer on Twitter @brmmeyer.*

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