

United Way celebrates fundraising success, honors volunteers

By Jonathan Streetman 812-331-4353 | jstreetman@heraldt.com | April 11, 2018

As the United Way's "United We Fight. United We Win" campaign came to a close Wednesday evening, Efrat Feferman was pleased with the results.

Feferman was hired as the United Way's executive director in late August of last year, mere weeks before the campaign started.

With the help of a great staff and a loyal group of volunteers, she said, they were able to pull it off — with room to build in the future.

"I knew that was going to be my focus when I was hired," Feferman said. "Overall, I feel really good about the campaign we had."

This year's campaign raised \$1,315,200, nearly \$15,000 more than last year's "Empowering Your Community. One Donation At A Time" campaign, which totaled \$1,300,363.

The total was announced during the annual United Way Celebration at Hoosier Energy, hosting the event for the second year.

The campaign's community co-chairs, Denise Lessow and Wendy Hernandez, touted the United Way's services and the companies and individuals who showed their support this year.

"You guys are really what pulls this campaign together and helps us do so many great things, (showing) that a little dollar can just multiply in what it gives back," Hernandez told the crowd.

The Indiana University campaign co-chairs, Idie Kesner and David Johnson, spoke about how supporting the United Way has become an annual campuswide initiative. Employees at IU raised more than \$830,000 in pledges — their largest total since 2013 — among 1,561 total givers.

"We know fully that a strong Bloomington is a strong Indiana University, and vice versa," Kesner said. "We know how connected we are to this community, and United Way is a big part of that."

The United Way also recognized several businesses for their continued support, and awarded several individuals for their contributions.

The Mary Alice Gray Award, presented for extraordinary volunteer service, was presented to Wain Martin. Martin has been involved with United Way for decades and has helped with correspondence among IU retirees. Martin reaches out to retirees when it's time to ask for donations "with just the right tone," and the pledges quickly begin to roll in, United Way staffer Trent Deckard said.

"I accept this award with heartfelt appreciation," Martin said, keeping his remarks brief while fighting a cold. "And I accept this award on behalf of the IU Retirees Association."

Feferman invited attendees while on their way out of the facility to grab a blank notecard. On that card, she asked everyone to write a positive message to a stranger, and in the coming days to hide that card somewhere around the community.

In such a way, Feferman said, the people who already contributed so much to the fundraising campaign can "mobilize your caring power with such a simple, small act."

Funds raised during the campaign remain local to support effective programs strengthening the building blocks of a better life. More information can be found at www.monroeunitedway.org.

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