

# United Way sets example of making county a better place

By Bob Zaltsberg 812-331-4364 | rzaltsberg@heraldt.com | Apr 16, 2018

The men and women in the spacious and well-appointed meeting room at Hoosier Energy last Wednesday evening had one thing in common: an interest in helping make Monroe County a better place for the people who live here.

This gathering was far from the only such meeting held in Bloomington every year. There are dozens, possibly even hundreds. Meetings at which like-minded people get together to celebrate reaching a common goal, which in this case was the end of the annual United Way fundraising campaign.

This United Way Celebration wasn't about reaching a financial goal, however, even though the \$1,315,200 was more than was raised last year and worth cheering. But United Way no longer sets financial goals. It seeks to raise as much money as it can to help its 25 member agencies, other donor-designated nonprofits, and a range of community building activities the organization has undertaken as it has transitioned from its primary focus of raising money.

This gathering was more about reaching a point in time to stop and acknowledge that people who care, people who participate, can make a positive difference in the lives of others.

The organization had a combative slogan for its campaign this year: United We Fight. United We Win.

Why not? We live in combative times.

Executive Director Efrat Feferman said the agency she leads and those who support it fight for a number of things. They fight so kids can enter kindergarten ready to succeed; against hunger and to make sure everyone has shelter; to make sure everyone has opportunities to succeed no matter their abilities. They fight to see no one goes uncared for.

United Way fights, she said, for a stronger community.

Those in the room included those who lead member agencies, which serve on the front lines of the fight to make this a better place for the underserved. They included representatives of businesses that give generously. They included some current and former members of local government. They included men and women who led the overall fund-raising campaign as well as several key sectors of it. They included donors who believe in the mission of United Way.

They included award winners, among them Wain Martin, who received the Mary Alice Gray Memorial Award for his long-term contributions, and not just with United Way.

The local United Way has changed over the years. It looks for places it can make the most impact. It builds partnerships and makes connections. It encourages and coordinates conversations about crucial issues.

Here's the main message I hope you'll take away today. Last Wednesday's event sparked this column not solely to sing the praises of United Way, though that organization deserves high praise. The culture in the room of unity, of how-can-I-help, of what-can-I-do is a culture shared by many area nonprofits. There's a group or organization close by with a mission that will line up with your desire to share what you have; to help somebody else; to make this a better place.

Join the fight.

Copyright 2018 [heraldtimesonline.com](http://heraldtimesonline.com), 1900 South Walnut Bloomington, IN