

United Way's fundraising campaign tops 2016 total

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United Way's "Empowering Your Community. One Donation At A Time" campaign came to a close Wednesday evening during a celebration at Hoosier Energy.

In past years, United Way Monroe County has set a campaign goal — a visual reminder to donors in the form of a thermometer. In 2016, the campaign narrowly topped its \$1.3 million goal, by \$28.

This year, in a campaign that began in late September, the United Way didn't set an overall goal. Instead, it worked with local organizations to set internal goals, Executive Director Barry Lessow said. Instead of worrying about that end goal, they set their sights on where those dollars were going.

Wednesday evening, Lessow announced this year's campaign total — \$1,300,363, or \$335 more than last year.

"I saw that total and I honestly couldn't believe it," Lessow said. "I really don't think (the absence of a goal) had much of an impact, positively or negatively. I think everybody had a plan and their own goals, and we knew as long as everybody does what they want to do throughout the campaign, we would match that number or do even better."

During the celebration, Lessow thanked the room full of donors and representatives from many of United Way's 25 member agencies.

"Thank you for caring about kids who want to read a book and seniors who want a ramp so they can live in their own home. Thank you for caring about families preparing for their first baby and for families who work hard but have trouble making ends meet," he said. "Thank you for caring about people with diabetes and people born with conditions that 50 years ago meant a lifetime of living in an institution and now can mean a life of work and creativity.

"And thank you for taking that caring and channeling it into action. Your work, your dedication, your support of United Way will continue to empower your community throughout 2017 and years beyond."

Lauren Robel, Indiana University's provost, thanked everyone at the celebration for supporting the "foundational nonprofit for our community."

"When we support the United Way, we're honoring all the ways that we're connected within this community," she said, adding that IU's philanthropic efforts were able to add more than \$800,000 to this year's campaign.

The Mary Alice Gray Memorial Award for extraordinary volunteer service was presented to Doris Burton at the end of the ceremony. This award recognizes United Way volunteers who have made a significant and sustained contribution to the organization. Burton joined the United Way Board in 1999, serving on several committees and leading the United Way campaign at IU. She has remained involved with United

Way since then and, for the past nine years, served as a member of the IU Campaign Cabinet and co-chaired the IU retirees' campaign.

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.



Barry Lessow, executive director of the United Way. David Snodgress | Herald-Times

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