

Merrill Area United Way

United Way



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Driving through Merrill it is easy to see it's garage and yard sale time. As the song goes, "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign. Seems we are overrun with so many signs, banners, event information, political campaign signs and others. It makes me wonder if the Merrill Area United Way "Live United" signs will stand out amongst all the others. The "Live United" signs will be out soon and hopefully will remind people that it is United Way campaign season. Your personal donations will help us support the agencies doing very important work in our community. We are challenged to reach our goal of \$178,000, up \$3,000 from the previous year. Keep an eye on the United Way Goal Barometer, located at the WPS property on East Main Street. At zero percent right now, the Barometer should leap forward in the next few weeks as we get the initial results in from the Church Mutual Insurance Company campaign. At this time, Church Mutual is on target to hit their campaign goal.

The money raised through the Merrill Area United Way supports 20 affiliate agencies and programs that we help fund. Financial support comes from individuals, families, retirees and the companies who have management support to internalize a campaign. Once the campaign wraps up, in early November, and donations

are tallied, the United Way Board of Directors determines the level at which we can help each funded agencies. We can only "make a difference" with local support coming from the campaign. Giving, advocating and volunteering are critical in making a difference. As such the annual campaign "IS IT". *We need your support* to help fund programs in our three major impact areas. The basic needs area includes getting a job, shelter, heat-electric-water utilities, food, clothing, transportation to get to a job, childcare so a parent can work. Additionally mental health, AODA counseling are important to addressing those financial needs and keeping a job. Health and education round out the major impact areas.

Each household should have already received the Merrill Area United Way flyer and invitation to donate to United Way. We only ask once a year for your donation. It is our annual appeal to the entire public with our direct mail piece to almost every household in the county. We realize there are so many requests through the mail, so United Way hopes you watch for ours. Donations may be mailed directly to the Merrill Area United Way, P.O. Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452, or donors may now go to the United Way website and donate through Pay Pal.

It is important to also mention one of the funded programs is the Merrill Community Homeless Center, doing business as Habitat Home. Encouraged by the United Way Board, this newer organization has completely renovated a property at 407 West Main Street to house a homeless warming center and a shelter for short-term, transitional housing for homeless, people and families. As the colder nights set in, we anticipate the opening of the facility this fall. Lincoln County Homelessness Task Force continues to track homeless numbers through various agencies and resource. Not including the schools numbers, HAVEN and Our Sisters Place, the Merrill community has been averaging 140-150 homeless people a year. Homelessness is not just an issue for supportive agencies, or United Way, but rather it's a community concern and it impacts our community in many ways.

United Way cares and is driven to make a positive difference in the Merrill area. To donate, send checks to Merrill Area United Way, P.O. Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. Our website is www.merrillareauitedway.org where Pay Pal donations can now be made. For further information e-mail us at united813@frontier.com ; or call our part-time office at 715-536-2016.