

At the onset of every holiday season we are reminded of why the work of our local United Way is so, so very important. We can't imagine going through the stress of the holidays without any money to buy your children a Christmas present, or to have a turkey dinner for Thanksgiving, or for that matter, not being able to pay the rent or know if you'll be able to keep a roof over your head.

During this season there are many lessons to be learned about giving from the heart. In that spirit, we should all be reminded that the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas and the New Year, are a wonderful time of year for not only enjoying all the blessings and gifts we have in our lives, but also a time to reflect on those that are less fortunate and extend a helping hand. United Way works closely with our 20 funded programs/agencies and each agency demonstrates the depth of need we have here in the Merrill area.

Merrill is so fortunate to have such caring people that support the community in so many ways. Many other small communities like ours don't have the same high level of caring demonstrated here. Nor do they have (or find) the capacity to reach out and develop the programs that Merrill has to offer. We encourage you to get involved in a way that will bring heartfelt meaning and self-satisfaction to you and your family. There are many local initiatives to help families through this season with food, clothing, housing and gifts for children.

Merrill supports the food pantry for holiday meals and turkeys, the Christmas Spirit Appeal, Salvation Army Bell Ringing, Toys for Tots, gifts for residents at PineCrest Nursing Home and other nursing facilities. There are families tied to several churches that need assistance, the breaking bread community meal, the tree of hope, the mitten tree, Food For Kids (providing food for weekends), the MAC Home for homeless, and the lists goes on. Watch and listen to the local media for opportunities for your family to get involved and volunteer or give from the heart this Holiday Season. For example, Trinity Lutheran Church of Christ is hosting the community Thanksgiving Dinner for many people. They may need volunteers and it's a great way to give back.

Although the United Way campaign is still open, with the expectation of wrapping it up by the end of November, we have had a successful campaign given Church Mutual Insurance Company surpassing their goal. The ultimate success of our campaign, and the level of financial support we can provide to the 20 funded programs relies on you. If you haven't provided a contribution to the campaign; now would be a great time to do so. Send checks to Merrill Area United Way today to P.O. Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. All dollars support local programs. For more information about the Merrill Area United Way visit our website at merrillareaunderway.org; or contact us by email united813@frontier.com; or call our part-time office at 715-536-2016.