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Foto News United Way Article

All year round hundreds of people and families stop at the Menard Center, where several service agencies are located. Those who stop are seeking assistance for the most basic of needs. In a few cases they may have been displaced from their home. Sometimes they are distraught because their electricity is about to be shut off, or they can't pay their rent, or maybe there is no food and their income, for whatever reason, has diminished. In instances where their income is limited to SSI payments, they find it difficult to live on the sparse income. These are people with basic needs. These are people who have lived in our community, have worked for our companies, and are now in need of help to carry on.

Merrill is a community with compassion and the ability to help these folks through difficult situations and, when possible, guide them to the point of getting back on their feet. The agencies receiving Merrill Area United Way funding that assist in the areas of basic needs have responsible staff that are trained to detect root causes and assist people on the premise that they help themselves too. North Central Community Action Program, St. Vincent DePaul, Salvation Army and HAVEN are support systems for people in need. The Merrill Food Pantry is also a United Way funded agency. On an annual basis the Merrill Food Pantry now serves over 7,000 clients. In addition, local church pantries also assist people.

Help through hard times is at the core of our Income/Basic Needs support area. While our funds go directly to the programs offered by the funded agencies, we on occasion will help in other ways.

The United Way Board of Directors held its Annual Meeting on February 6th and passed its annual budget and agency allocations which included \$166,660 going out to agencies and programs for our supported three major impact areas of basic needs/income; health and education. All donors should be proud of their giving to United Way as these dollars really are part of the answer in addressing community needs.

While many people give to United Way, we make certain that our areas of education, health and basic needs are all supported through our nineteen funded agencies. Remember donations are accepted all year at MAUW, P O Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. For information about the Merrill Area United Way, email united813@frontier.com. Or visit our website at merrillareunitedway.org.