

Because of your generosity, both in dollars and in time, 35 local non-profit Partner Agencies and 57 programs will continue to be funded through Greater Mankato Area United Way in 2010. In a year where it would have been easy to throw in the towel and chalk it up to a tough economy, the Greater Mankato area dug in and pledged \$1,820,000; that's 97% of an aggressive, roll-your-sleeves-up-&-get-down-to-business-goal.

Thank You to our volunteers and donors who made it possible.

2010 Volunteer Thank You Luncheon

Sponsored by HickoryTech & Ridley, Inc.

Every year over 350 individuals volunteer for our United Way. It's because of your efforts, your gifts of time & talent, your insight and your support that United Way is able to be successful in convening the community, connecting people to resources, and securing the funding so needed in our community.

The annual Volunteer Thank You Soup & Salad Luncheon is our opportunity to say Thank You and recognize our volunteers for their service. We also take the time at the event to highlight those that went above & beyond. Here are this year's winners:

Volunteer of the Year **Katie Nerem**

As a leader in our community, Katie Nerem has been a strong supporter and advocate for our United Way. Over the last decade she has donated countless hours to help our organization move forward, and has served in a leadership role, donating her time and talent with several other non-profit organizations in our community.



Even before joining the United Way Board of Directors 6 years ago, Katie was deeply involved as a Community Impact volunteer. For the past 6 years she has served on the Board of Directors, during which time she has also served as the Community Impact Division Chair, Impact Team Chair, Human Resources Committee Chair, Executive Committee Member, and as the current Board Chair. Katie has helped to create a vision for how United Way resources should be invested in the community to make lasting changes.

2010 Campaign Pledges:

\$1,820,000

A thank you message from 2010 Campaign Chair, Kevin Newman:

"First of all I would like to say, WOW! What a community and what an organization! I would also like to thank all the volunteers for the hard work and effort put forth to make this year's campaign a huge success in a very difficult year. We continue to be grateful for everything that has been done. It was truly an honor and a privilege to work with so many great community-minded people and organizations in this year's campaign. Thank you once again for all your hard work."

Education: what's the big deal?

Thanks to you, in 2010 United Way funding will continue to support local critical programming in the key areas of Education, Income and Health.

For her on-going leadership, commitment, energy and passion for United Way and our community, we are proud to name Katie Nerem as our 2010 Volunteer of the Year.

Unsung Hero **Melinda Wedzina**

This award recognizes a person who works behind the scenes



every day to advance the common good of our community; one family at a time. She encompasses what it means to LIVE UNITED, and, as a stay-at-home-mom, gave up her family dining room table

until she was able to get an office space donated.

Her volunteer work has become as demanding as a full-time job. She has led a dedicated group of volunteers to define the organization's goals and strategies, form a Board of Directors, and begin the path of gaining 501(c)3 status. She has pulled together partners from the school district, university, business community, healthcare providers, and other sectors, and has led the crucial efforts that have developed a new pilot program called the BackPack Food Program which will help to send child-safe, nutritious food home on weekend and school breaks to local at-risk children.

For all the work she does that goes unnoticed, and for giving of her time, talents and energy just because she believes in it, we say thank you to this year's Unsung Hero, Melinda Wedzina.

Businesses of the Year Award Winners

Over 200 businesses share their resources with our United Way every year. Each year the Business of the Year Awards are awarded to a few outstanding businesses in recognition of companies whose employees have greatly benefited Greater Mankato Area United Way through their financial generosity and their involvement in United Way. Here are this year's winners by category:

U.S. Bank (1-49 employees)



U.S. Bank's employees increased their pledge amount by 20%, and all - that's right, 100% - of their employees pledged. In addition to the four Heart Club donors and six #1 club members, U.S. Bank's employees gave generously not only financially, but also with their time as seven U.S. Bank employees were active United Way volunteers in 2009.

Why does United Way focus so much on early education? If you've ever asked yourself, "what's the big deal?", please [click here](#) to watch this video, then read on. *PS - The video is on YouTube, so if you can't watch it at work, forward it to your home email and watch it there. It's worth your time.*



Research shows that when you change the first five years, you change everything. Your donation to Greater Mankato Area United Way is invested in programs that promote learning beginning at birth; programs like ECFE that partners with childcare providers to build kindergarten skills; like TAPP which provides nearly 9,500 hours of early childhood instruction each year to teen parent families to give them more confidence about parenting and improve their parenting skills; like First Steps that provides 1:1 education to at-risk parents on child development and education so that they can help prepare their child to be ready to learn upon entry into kindergarten; like Ready! for Kindergarten that provides parenting education classes to local parents to make them aware of critical development milestones, and give them tips and games they can easily integrate into their lives at home to help their children build crucial skills; like Adult Basic Education that provides nearly 4,900 hours of parent education each year directed to at-risk families; and like Books for Kids, a United Way program

Mankato Family YMCA (50-149 employees)



The Mankato Family YMCA nearly doubled their employee giving over last year with an incredible 97% increase. Even with a significant number of part time and young employees, the YMCA has 72% employee participation in the United Way campaign. This generosity is especially commendable as a non-profit agency that already gives back so much to our community! As a United Way partner agency, YMCA staff also spent a lot of time attending rallies last fall to help share the story of United Way and the impact of United Way donors.

Immanuel St. Joseph's - Mayo Health System (150+)

ISJ-MHS employees increased their total pledge amount by 20% to a whopping \$134,231! The number of Heart Club members more than doubled over last year to include nearly 100 employees. In addition to sharing their financial resources, there were also five employees who were active United Way volunteers in 2009. Thank you for the difference you make in our community!



that sends free books directly to over 4,600 local children's homes, along with parenting resources, from birth to age 5 to encourage love for learning and to foster crucial interaction between children and their caregivers.

Change the statistics.
Change the stories.
Change their futures.

With your gift to United Way, you are part of the change.

Disclaimer: the video linked in this article was created by a non-profit organization that is not funded by Greater Mankato Area United Way.

While this eNewsletter highlights some outstanding folks in our community, United Way is about the power that each and every one of us has when we combine our gifts. When we pool our resources and invest in programs with real outcomes, that impact real people, we are all making a difference. So whether you give \$5 or \$500, THANK YOU. We couldn't do it without you.
