

## United Way of Mercer County Most Frequently Asked Questions



### **Who runs United Way of Mercer County?**

United Way of Mercer County is run by a volunteer board of directors comprised of community leaders, experts, and others interested in creating community solutions. The board is responsible for governance, fiduciary oversight, and staff.

### **Are volunteers at United Way of Mercer County compensated?**

No, our volunteers are donating their own time and energy to help United Way of Mercer County with our events, campaigns, and committees.

### **Why should someone who doesn't use any agency services care about the success of United Way of Mercer County?**

United Way of Mercer County partner agencies provide services for all people from the very youngest children to senior citizens. No one knows when a problem could devastate you or a loved one. By giving to United Way of Mercer County, you can be assured that necessary services will be in place when they are needed.

### **How do I know that my contribution is being used for program services?**

Ever mindful of being good stewards of donated monies, United Way of Mercer County is open and transparent about its finances. Our 990 and audit are posted on our website at [www.uwmercercounty.org](http://www.uwmercercounty.org). We are always available to talk to donors and concerned individuals about United Way of Mercer County finances.

### **How can I give if I do not work in a company running a United Way drive?**

If you do not have access to United Way of Mercer County through your work, you can still give by call (724) 981-1884 or by logging onto our website at [www.uwmercercounty.org](http://www.uwmercercounty.org).

### **How does United Way and its Partner Agencies help?**

United Way provides for the broad range of services needed to improve lives in our community. For example, a mother who needs food, safety, shelter, counseling, and services will access our agency network through 211. One agency cannot provide all of these services, but a gift to United Way ensures that we can bring together the agencies needed to improve the life of this woman and her family successfully. By donating to United Way you are making the most significant difference possible in someone's life.

### **Why should I give to United Way and not directly to an agency of my choice?**

United Way of Mercer County offers donors the opportunity to support the entire community and maximize their giving by supporting United Way, which provides a wide-range of services to meet community needs. United Way ensures that an individual's total needs are met. Contributing through United Way of Mercer County also offers smaller local agencies the advantage of fundraising, while freeing up their limited staff to focus on providing services. Additionally, United Way of Mercer County offers donors the opportunity to designate a gift to a specific agency. We offer this for donors' convenience and to enable them to take advantage of payroll deduction, which is the easiest way to give. United Way of Mercer County would never discourage direct giving if a donor prefers that option.

### **How can my favorite nonprofit charity receive funding through United Way of Mercer County?**

Agencies receive funds with program funding as partner agencies and through donor designations.

### **How do I find agencies that need help so I can volunteer?**

Almost all agencies are eager for volunteers. Your commitment can range from a one-day project, to a daily commitment. You can find volunteer opportunities by contacting 211 or by watching your local newspapers. Volunteer opportunities can also be found at United Way of Mercer County's website, [www.uwmercercounty.org](http://www.uwmercercounty.org).

### **My boss coerced me into giving to United Way. What should I do?**

United Way strongly urges employers to be sensitive to the highly personal nature of charitable giving. If you feel you are, or have been, a victim of coercive tactics to require you to give, please notify the campaign coordinator at your company or your supervisor. If you don't feel comfortable discussing your concerns at your company, please call your United Way. We will happily and discreetly return money, speak with your company's officers, or take whatever steps necessary to ensure that coercion does not play a part in your company's campaign.

### **Why do I see "United Way Agencies" doing their own fundraising?**

Technically, your United Way does not fund "agencies." It funds programs. In this way, United Way can ensure that donors' gifts are going directly to important services that help people, not capital projects or overhead costs. Individual agencies must do separate fundraising to cover those expenses. However, United Way helps agencies in other ways besides funding particular programs. Funding through United Way can increase the credibility of agencies, making it easier for them to win foundation, state, and federal grants. Indeed, tens of thousands of dollars or more in such grants may be awarded in the Mercer County area each year as a result of the endorsing quality of United Way funding.

### **Will the money I give to United Way go outside the community?**

No. The money raised in the Mercer County area stays in the Mercer County area unless you, as the donor, request that it be sent to another United Way.

### **How can I make sure that my gift will benefit the community where I live?**

Through United Way's donor choice program, you have the option of designating your United Way gift back to the community in which you live so that it will benefit agencies there. For example, if you live in Lawrence County, but work in Mercer County, you can specify that your gift go to the United Way of Lawrence County.

### **Who decides where the money goes?**

People like you, right here in Mercer County! More than 100 community volunteers, experts, and agency staff work together to identify community needs, reduce duplication of services, and close gaps in services as they invest donors' gifts in the areas of health, income, education, and safety in the Mercer County area.

### **How much of each contribution is spent on administrative costs?**

Only 16 cents out of every dollar pledged covers fundraising expenses and other administrative costs. It's an investment well made when you consider that nationally-accepted maximum limits for non-profit overhead costs vary from 40 percent to 50 percent. The Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Council of Better Business Bureaus sets the maximum permissible rate for overhead costs at non-profit organizations at 50 percent. The National Charities Information Bureau sets the rate at 40 percent.

### **Does United Way of America set policy for our local United Way?**

No. Every decision at your United Way is made locally for the benefit of our community. United Way of Mercer County is a separate organization, operating independently of the trade organization, United Way of America. United Way of Mercer County is governed by its board of trustees, comprised of local business and community leaders and assisted by more than 300 volunteers from the local community.

### **How does United Way pay for its events?**

Annual events, such as Campaign Kick-Off, are designed to boost morale and create a synergy among volunteers. Donor contributions are not used to fund United Way of Mercer County events. Sponsorship defrays the cost and the remainder is covered by the ticket price for each event.

### **What if I don't like one of the agencies that United Way supports?**

You can specify which United Way agency or agencies will receive your gift by designating your gift. Donor designation forms can be obtained from a campaign solicitor.