

Here's how United Way builds, distributes dreams

Linda Doggett and Bob Shearman

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(Photo: Special to The News-Press)

On October 30, United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades, and Okeechobee will be kicking off the 62nd annual campaign. As this year's Campaign Chairs, we'd like to share with you some of our personal reasons for supporting United Way.

It's not only that our United Way helps support 96 agencies and 260 programs. It's not only that our United Way has the highest rating available on Charity navigator and that 92.2% of every dollar goes to agencies and programs. And it's not only that nearly 500 volunteers review the agencies and programs every year... it's so much more.

Bob Shearman

Like a lot of people I initially felt I didn't have that much to contribute and I couldn't make a meaningful contribution, so it was OK for me to leave that to other people. Then I agreed to join a United Way Allocations Team and I visited United Way agencies. I met people who were homeless, hungry, or desperate and saw the difference that the United Way and the agencies it supports made in their lives. It gave them a way forward. It gave them hope, shelter, food and it was all because somebody cared enough to check a box and make a pledge which then supported a program and gave them the shelter, the food, and the hope. Knowing there is a need and knowing that I can help, why would I not contribute?

Linda Doggett

When you are in the courthouse every day, you see people who come into the court system who are dealing with pretty bad situations. But I am thankful to know that one or more of the amazing programs that United Way supports will be there to catch them when they need it the most. It's very impactful for me to see United Way partners like HOPE Clubhouse, Pace Center for Girls, AMI Kids, or the Children's Network provide a caring environment and bring hope and assistance to these folks when they really need that help. For me, it renews my faith every day because I see these residents in their most despairing times and I know that United Way agencies will provide guidance and support.

This year's theme is The Power of U! What does that mean? It means that YOU have the power to make a difference in the lives of our residents. It means that any contribution to United Way, large or small, can positively affect our community. This year's campaign goal is \$10.3 million. For that ambitious goal to be met, it is going to take a collective effort. One person's gift, united with many, can make a stronger community for all of us. The Power of U is the power of United Way.

Over the next weeks our United Way agencies will be sharing their stories with you and what it means to be a United Way Partner. We invite you to go on this journey with us so you can see what a difference your United Way is making in your community. We also invite you to join us for our Kick Off on October 30 at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall. You can purchase tickets by visiting our website at www.UnitedWayLee.org. Come experience how your United Way and your community leaders are Living United.

Linda Doggett and Bob Shearman are the 2018 United Way campaign co-chairs.

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