

United Way closing in on \$250,000 goal for 2012

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United Way of Northern Ozaukee has raised \$175,000 of its \$250,000 goal, and Executive Director Barbara Bates-Nelson said she's cautiously optimistic the group will be able to reach its target before the books are closed at the end of March.

"I feel like we're going to end strong," Bates-Nelson said. "There's a lot of anxiety about what the new year will bring, but the fact that people have responded really says volumes about our community."

The residential campaign is down slightly, and the workplace campaign isn't completed, she said, adding the organization solicited a few new businesses this year and hasn't heard from them yet.

"I'm excited to hear from them and see if they put us over the top," Bates-Nelson said.

Some larger campaigns also haven't reported yet, she added.

Small business donations are down about 5%, she said, but corporate donations are up.

Charter Steel and Port Washington State Bank, two "key players," have increased their donations about 10%, Bates-Nelson said.

"If the rest of our campaign goes the way our leaders are, we'll be OK," she said. "There are some real bright spots."

Businesses came up with some innovative ways to support the United Way this year, Bates-Nelson said. She pointed to Port State Bank which, when it launched its Facebook

page this year, donated \$1 for every "like" it received. That resulted in a \$1,000 donation.

"People were very generous, thinking outside the box," Bates-Nelson said.

The agency also received some unexpected donations from internal promotions run by some local businesses, she said, including Rexnord and Target.

The United Way goal this year was "very aggressive," she said, a 25% increase from the previous year intended to reflect the increasing need in the county.

And that, she said, may be the reason people are responding to the campaign so well.

"As our money gets tighter, I think people want to make sure it stays close to home because they know someone who lost a job, who's struggling," Bates-Nelson said. "We're seeing the need more because it's in our neighborhood."

United Way of Northern Ozaukee also launched a children's book donation campaign at Lincoln Elementary School in Port Washington in 2012, Bates-Nelson said. About 70 books were collected and donated to Ozaukee Family Services.

Although United Way officially ended its campaign Monday, the books don't close until March 31, Bates-Nelson said, so people can still make donations through March.

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