

Q & A

WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE UNITED WAY?

How does the United Way work?

Today, United Way of Central Jersey funds more than 117 programs that promote health care and social welfare programs. These programs are administered by the 42 program funded agencies, which apply for funding from the United Way. The broad range of categories which benefit residents of Middlesex County and Franklin Township include: Childcare, Community Services, Counseling and Emergency Services, Seniors and Health Services, Youth and Services to the Disabled. Programs cover such diverse areas as emergency shelters for the homeless, soup kitchens, family and youth counseling, elder care, girl and boy scouting, meals-on-wheels, and so much more.

How does United Way raise its fund?

Each year the United Way of Central Jersey conducts a concerted fundraising effort encompassing the period September through December. During this time, the United Way staff with a cast of local volunteers solicits contributions from area businesses which are encouraged to implement employee payroll deduction plans, by far the most efficient and effective process of collecting funds. Simultaneously, area residents, professionals, service groups and various other organizations are contacted and encouraged to contribute to the yearly effort.

Once collected, how are funds distributed?

United Way of Central Jersey's volunteer committee members review all applications submitted by nonprofit agencies for funding. A thorough evaluation is made of each request, and based on the merits of the program and available funds, approval is given or denied. Decisions are also based on assessed community needs, and available research. Once approved, agencies must submit periodic performance reports to United Way of Central Jersey contingent upon a prescribed list of eligibility requirements. All new agencies and/or requests for new program funding must adhere to this review process.

What is the United Way of America?

United Way of America is a trade association, providing a variety of services and technical assistance to the 1400 local United Ways across the country. The purpose is to support the United Way through producing national advertising including the National Football League television ads, developing campaign videos, conducting national market research and providing consulting services and training programs for local volunteers and professionals.

What is the United Way of Tri-State?

United Way of Tri-State was established to act as a regional fund raiser in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut area for corporations that have facilities in multiple communities, and employees that live in areas different from which they work. These corporations wanted just one request for a corporate gift and assurance that contributions would have meaningful impact on their employees' local community.

What is the relationship between United Way of America and United Way of Central Jersey?

Each United Way is an independent community resource, governed by a local board of volunteers. At the United Way of Central Jersey a Board of 22 volunteers set the local policies and ensures that they are followed. United Way of America exists to serve local United Ways and does not exert control or have any authority over the local United Way management practices.

Who makes up the United Way Board of Directors?

United Way's governing Board is comprised of leaders from the business community, labor, government and human services, representing the diversity of each individual community.

How do I know than an agency received my contribution?

Some agencies are not equipped to track the names of donors who designate to them. A donor who calls an agency may not always be able to confirm receipt of the contribution. Donors may, however, always call United Way directly to confirm proper handling of the designation.

When does United Way mail my designated Contribution to the Agency?

United Way is not able to forward designated contributions until we receive the money ourselves. Contributions through payroll deductions will be paid quarterly on the calendar year.

Why my designation gift is charged a processing fee?

Charges must be assessed to cover the extra processing required to record, track and distribute designated gifts.

Does United Way provide Donor Choice?

Absolutely. United Way will provide all donors with the opportunity to designate their gifts. A clear array of choices, including United Way, will be made available. Designated gifts will be paid directly to all specific agencies. This means that designation to United Way member agencies will be paid separately, apart from the money allocated through the annual fund distribution process.

How does the United Way calculate campaign results?

Campaign results are generally calculated on gross amounts raised for all campaign efforts within a specific geographic area. To ensure monies are not double counted United Ways agree to report their figures before designations are sent or received across geographic boundaries. United Ways count funds raised where they are managing the campaign and incurring the costs to do so. The United Way system has guidelines for reporting campaign results and for calculating overhead, which meet the highest generally accepted accounting standards and practices.

What are the United Way's overhead expenses?

United Way is proud of our overhead which on national basis averages 13%, generally low compared to others. While no one number or percentage can ever define operating efficiency for organizations as diverse as those in philanthropic arena, the Better Business Bureau has defined what they consider to be "acceptable" overhead rates, which is one measure of efficiency.

- Better Business Bureau states that fundraising and administrative costs must not exceed 35%.
- United Way's national average for fundraising and administrative costs is 13%.

United Ways understand that donors and the public are concerned about the cost of fundraising and other expenses. In that regard, United Ways constantly strive for efficiency without sacrificing service to the community.

Are all of your expenses included in your overhead?

Our overhead includes expenses related to fundraising and administration. In accordance with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants we do not include expenses attributed to services for our community. Examples of these services include information and referral for people in need, public policy activities, volunteer development, and community needs assessment.

Are all United Ways' reporting and accounting practices the same?

Local United Ways are responsible to their own volunteer governing boards to be fully accountable for their management and financial transactions to ensure that the unique circumstances and needs of each community are met. However, United Ways are committed to providing comparable and consistent information to our donors. That's why we have guidelines and practices and are an industry leader in terms of responsiveness to donors, consistency, and clarity regarding the questions and concerns of efficiency, costs, and value to our communities. There is nothing more important to the entire United Way system than upholding the trust given to us by the American public and our donors, and we maintain our commitment to full and open accountability.

Individuals who live and/or work in Central Jersey are encouraged to volunteer as United Way of Central Jersey Board members or for one of the many committees that help to make this organization work effectively and efficiently.

Call 732-247-3727 for information or visit our website at www.uwcj.org.