

United Way Campaign Reaches Third of Fundraising Goal

Drew Viguet | Posted: Wednesday, October 30, 2013 8:00 am

The Hogs United fundraising campaign is expected to raise \$150,000 for the United Way of northwest Arkansas. The program runs from the beginning of October through the end of November.

“The United Way supports agencies throughout NWA that help working families thrive,” said Kathy Deck, the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research. “This is a way that faculty, staff and students at the University of Arkansas can give to the region and help out working families.”

The United Way helps working families by supporting education, income, health and safety net programs. Last year, the campaign raised \$140,000. This year, the goal is to raise a slightly more ambitious, but achievable, \$150,000, Deck said.

The event is important because it gives to a cause that makes a crucial difference in people’s lives, said Steward Pence, the director of philanthropy for Associated Student Government.

“I believe it is important that faculty, staff and students give to the United Way and its causes,” Pence said. “Without organizations like the United Way, thousands of individuals and families would be without critical aspects of a healthy, happy and quality life.”

This is the 79th year the UofA has supported the United Way of northwest Arkansas.

“We are just over \$50,000, so about a third of the way there,” Deck said. “We still have a lot of time, but we want to make sure everyone donates up front, so we do not have to scramble at the end.”

The money goes to support over 100,000 people in northwest Arkansas. One in every four people in the region had access to a United Way funded agency over the past year, Deck said.

Students can do a couple of things to help with the campaign, she said. Collection facilities will be located around campus, and students will be able to designate their funds to a program or cause they care about, such as Meals on Wheels, literacy and credit counseling, Deck said.

The campaign also raises awareness and stresses the importance of giving to those in need.

“It is easiest to see the prosperity, the building and all of the wealth and all of the things that are going on,” Deck said of northwest Arkansas, “but it is important to understand how many of our friends and neighbors need help. And these are hard-working families who are doing the best that they can, but for whatever reason, are not thriving. The United Way mission is to help these hard working families by supporting them in particular areas.”

Any amount helps, and everyone can make a difference, Deck said.

“If students are interested in making a difference, we can let them know how their money can go directly to the United Way,” Deck said. “We would be happy to help them and get them hooked up with the donation system.”

If students are unable to donate money to United Way, there are opportunities for them to donate their time, Deck said.

“Students should take the time to go out and volunteer with the many charities and support organizations in the area,” she said “For those unable to give monetarily, you can still make a difference.”

Ninety-nine percent of the donations stay in northwest Arkansas, and more than 85 percent of every dollar goes directly to an agency.

“We are the university, and we are an integrated part of this community, and we need to help where we can,” Deck said.

Last year, the UA had an 11 percent participation rate of faculty and staff. The goal this year is to reach 15 percent faculty and staff involvement.

Most other Southeastern Conference schools also participate in the campaign. Alabama had a 55 percent faculty and staff involvement last year. Auburn had 26 percent, Florida had 24 percent and Georgia had 19 percent.

“We are in the middle, but we’d like to be closer to the top,” Deck said.

A key goal of the campaign is to put struggling, working families in the community into a situation where they can thrive.

“What is really important about this campaign is realizing that you can be a hard working family and still be struggling mightily,” Deck said. “The idea is that we give to programs that will help make a difference in peoples lives so that they can get into a situation where they are able to thrive.”