

United Way launches fundraising campaign

SEPTEMBER 28, 2011

FREMONT -- Building a strong community through charitable giving was the focus of several speakers during United Way of Sandusky County's annual campaign kickoff breakfast Thursday.

Executive Director Abby Slemmer, who was hired as the agency's chief staffer in December, talked about her experience as a mother and how it has inspired her personally to give to the organization.

Slemmer showed a photograph of her two boys to illustrate her point.

"They are why I give to the United Way," she said. "My second child was born with some difficulties and, to me, going through that with him I've learned what this county has to offer someone who chooses to stay in the county and raise their family. Many different agencies came about to help him get to where he is today, and for that I'm forever grateful."

John and Brenda Havens, who are serving as the campaign's honorary co-chairs, spoke about their own philanthropic activity in the community and why it is important to them.

"We love Sandusky County," John Havens said. "We were so honored this spring when we were called up and asked to be your spokespeople. It just blew us away."

John Havens said funding raised by United Way goes to very important programs that help cancer patients, students with developmental disabilities, families without food at Christmas, youth in 4-H and many others in the community.

"We need to get out there and raise those dollars, because that is how we can keep funding these great programs," Havens said. "All I have to say is live united and support United Way."

Fremont Ross High School principal and United Way board member Jose Hernandez also spoke, saying giving to United Way is important because the funds go to so many organizations in the community.

"United Way contributes to everybody," Hernandez said. "Some of us have the means to give and some of us have the means to volunteer."

Local United Way board members reported that the organization has already raised \$492,370, 59 percent of the \$825,000 goal for the 2011 campaign.

"We are off to a good start," Slemmer said.

Pacesetters, businesses and organizations who contributed before the campaign kickoff, were recognized and included Crown Battery, Fremont Federal Credit Union, Green Bay Packaging, Mosser Construction, Style Crest, Terra Community College, Whirlpool Corp. -- Clyde Division and United Way of Sandusky County.

The funding goal, set by the organization's board of trustees each year, has steadily declined over the past few years, from \$860,000 in 2009 and \$850,000 in 2010. Slemmer said the change in the amount is simply a sign of the economy and what county residents are able to give.

The new director already has implemented a new fundraising program, which allows people at large events to send a text message to donate to United Way. By texting "Sandusky" to 85944 and replying to the next message with "yes" to confirm, anyone can easily donate \$10 to the organization through their phone company.

"It appeals to a younger generation," Slemmer said.

She said the cellphone giving program has already been broadcast at Fremont Ross football games and she hopes to use it in the future at large events.

Slemmer encouraged any businesses with questions about how to run a successful campaign in their workplaces to call the local office at 419-334-8938.



This year's United Way honorary campaign co-chairs, John and Brenda Havens, speak about community service during the organization's annual campaign kickoff breakfast Thursday morning at Fremont Country Club. / Mark Tower/News-Messenger