

The 2009 Economy “A United Way Response”

The current economic situation in the World and the United States is making a very real impression in Greenville County. The current trends nationally in unemployment, home foreclosures, and access to credit are a present reality in Greenville County. Over the last six months the United Way of Greenville County has kept a careful eye on the situation and has taken several proactive steps in responding to the specific needs of the most economically challenged in our community. In light of the growing need for a comprehensive and strategic response to this challenging environment the United Way proposes the following response:

1. **Community Investment.** In making the strategic decision to identify three stake-in-the ground issues the United Way has positioned itself to provide leadership in addressing the immediate needs of Greenville county residents while continuing to address the long-term root causes of systemic community problems.
 - The Financial Stability Council will continue to provide leadership in identifying opportunities to help Greenville County Citizens increase income; build savings, and sustain assets.
 - Through collaboration with conventional and unconventional partners the United Way will provide strategic leadership in addressing workforce development initiatives; enhancing the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program; and a newly formed Greenville County housing taskforce partnership.
 - Convene Regional and National United Way meetings to identify best practice models and innovative approaches to support our community during this time of crisis and beyond.
 - Maintain an understanding that eventually the economy will recover and any strategy undertaken to address the immediate need should be tied to a longer term strategic priority.
2. **Program Investment.** The value of partner programs and funding is clearly evident in this current environment; a commitment to ensuring that program funding that support the five focus areas is in place is essential to weathering this current storm. The United Way will enhance its work with program providers by:
 - Maintaining program funding at its current level based on successful program review.
 - Provide training with agency providers on the “how-to’s” of advocacy.
 - Monitor the current economic crises and its impact on partner agency providers.
 - Track budgetary cuts from state and federal funding sources and advocate accordingly.
 - Provide recommendations to legislators on the long-term impact of cuts to Greenville County’s citizens.

3. **Partner Agency Support.** The opportunity to facilitate strong agency collaboration is essential during these times and based on partner provider feedback United Way leadership is essential. The United Way will:
- Provide leadership in identifying and facilitating a pathway forward for smaller nonprofit agencies that are struggling in the current environment.
 - Convene a feasibility study to determine the best way to consolidate “back office” operations for non-profits.
 - Proactively work with the Greenville community (public, private, and faith-based organizations) to identify opportunities to collaborate on short term needs with implications for longer-term effectiveness.
 - Work with partner community organizations that provide emergency assistance to monitor the number and amount of requests for emergency help.
 - Monitor the number and amount of requests for emergency assistance, and provide a bi-monthly report to the United Way Board of Trustees.
 - Help the ‘newly poor’ navigate the emergency assistance system, by developing a new United Way web page, to include forms, FAQ and links.
 - Move 2-1-1 from its successful soft launch to full community launch as soon as possible.
 - Monitor food pantries and soup kitchens for adequate resources and capacity to provide support.
 - Identify and provide information and support on funding opportunities or opportunities to leverage grant initiatives.
 - Promote the use of the United Way and Hands On Greenville partnership, placing volunteers to compliment the work of agency staff who are working to meet an increasing demand for service.

The United Way will proceed in the coming months with an eye on the economy and a finger on the pulse of our community; it is committed to protecting and providing the funding allocation to its partner agencies and working with the community and its leaders in proactively addressing any emerging needs.

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