

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS UNITED WAY OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY?

United Way of Santa Cruz County is a 67-year-old independent local non-profit organization governed by community volunteers. We raise money, mostly through workplace campaigns, and partner with local nonprofit health and human services programs to provide and create opportunities for a good life for all. We also lead collaborative initiative to unite and apply resources to address specific critical issues in our community

### WHAT IS THE UNITED WAY COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND?

This is the pool of unrestricted donor gifts that distribute to our partner programs to further results in ensuring that our youth will succeed in school and in life, our families will be financially stable and independent and our residents will achieve good health. The Fund currently has 32 partner programs from 20 agencies. Each program is selected by a group of volunteers because they offer measurable results for our goals. Each partner programs is carefully scrutinized on a regular basis by groups of community volunteers to assure donors their investments are used effectively.

### What is “LIVE UNITED”?

UNITED WAY IS ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD BY CREATING OPPORTUNITES FOR A GOOD LIFE FOR ALL BY FOCUSING ON YOUTH SUCCESS, FAMILY FINANCIAL STABILITY, AND HEALTH. LIVE UNITED is a call to action to our community to participate in advancing the common good -- to give, to advocate, to volunteer. The idea is that united, we are powerful; united, we can change what we see in the world around us.

### What are United Way of Santa Cruz County’s Initiatives?

These initiatives are community-wide collaborations lead by the United Way to address specific social issues. They are: The Children’s Network, a committee to reduce the fragmentation of programs for at-risk children and families in the County; Go for Health, an initiative to address health and social issues to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity; Success by 6, a United Way initiative to ensure that all children enter kindergarten healthy, well adjusted and ready to learn; and Together for Youth, a group of people from all sectors committed to reducing teen alcohol abuse and methadone use. Please visit our website for in depth information on each.

### How is United Way really different from other non-profits?

Only the United Way has the reach, expertise and experience to bring together local donors, other nonprofits, neighborhoods, volunteers and companies to pursue a common goal. Only through United Way do we find community solutions to issues that affect our community. And these efforts are yielding results – for example, in our county teen pregnancy is down, homelessness is down, and 98% of our children have health insurance.

## **WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO UNITED WAY IN ADDITION TO MY OTHER CHARITIES?**

**United we are powerful!**

**We are 100% committed to Santa Cruz County.** 100% of money donated to the Community Investment Fund stays in our county. Last year, over 56,000 people ( or 1 in 5 county residents) were served by partner programs funded by the Community Investment Fund.

**We are careful stewards of your donations.** All programs funded by the Community Investment Fund go through yearly performance reviews by volunteer panels. The results of these reviews inform final funding decisions.

**We Listen to the community when investing your gift.** Donations to the Community Investment Fund are allocated according to community needs reflected in the United Way led nationally recognized Community Assessment Project—15 years of data about Santa Cruz County residents.

**Together, we can do more than we can separately – right here at home.**

## **HOW IS UNITED WAY OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RELATED TO UNITED WAY OF AMERICA?**

Although United Way of Santa Cruz County is one of 1,400 local members of United Way of America (UWA) UWA does not own or dictate policy to the United Way of Santa Cruz County. We pay dues equal to approximately 1% of the amount we raise during our campaign and in return UWA provides support services, materials, education, discounts and coordinates activities with national organizations. The United Way of Santa Cruz County is completely autonomous.

## **WILL UNITED WAY LET ME GIVE DIRECTLY TO MY FAVORITE CHARITY?**

It is important that we, as individuals, support those causes that are close to our heart. You can designate your gift to a specific non-profit agency in Santa Cruz County. It should be noted that the agency you designate to must be a qualified 501©(3) tax-exempt nonprofit. If you choose to donate to a non profit other than to one of our partner agencies or to any United Way, a maximum of 7% of your designated contribution will be deducted for cost recovery. If we are unable to locate your designated agency or it is not a qualified organization, we will make every reasonable attempt to contact you before redirecting your donation to the Community Investment Fund.

But it is also important that we, as a community, use our collective strength to address community problems. Through the Community Investment Fund of the United Way we have identified a shared set of concerns and can create an effective plan to address them.

## **HOW MUCH OF MY GIFT TO UNITED WAY GOES TO PAY OPERATING EXPENSES?**

During the most recent fiscal year (2008-2009), our core operating expenses were 12%. (unaudited). In the non-profit world, this is considered to be extremely low. The United Way of Santa Cruz County is a 4-star (exceptional) steward as rated for operational efficiencies by national watchdog Charity Navigator.

## **WHAT ABOUT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES?**

United Way offers volunteer opportunities for the individual, the family, a work team, or a whole company. Current opportunities are listed on our website ([www.unitedwaysc.org](http://www.unitedwaysc.org)) or call us at 831. 479.5466 and we will match you with your interests and time availability.