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United Way allocates money from fund drive

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Lynn Hart is glad to be one of the new guys on the block. More than anything, she's relieved.

"This funding from the United Way is going to remove a lot of the pressure on us to raise money through contributions and fundraising," she said.

Hart is the executive director of the Russell County Child Advocacy Center, one of two new partner agencies named by United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley on Thursday morning. The other is the Marion County Family Connection, where a new program called Marion Midnight Basketball will be funded.

"It's something we've wanted to start, but couldn't because the county doesn't have much in the way of resources," said Kevin Brown, the coordinator.

Those involved in the basketball program must attend workshops preparing them for getting started. Marion Family Connection is receiving \$50,000 of the \$4,972,301 being allocated by United Way while the Russell County Child Advocacy Center is getting \$33,000. Russell's programs involve prevention of child sexual abuse and helping those who are already victims. Forensic interview, counseling, referral, prevention and support services are provided free of charge.

The agency depends primarily on state funding and grants. "In 2003, our state funding got cut to \$80,000," Hart said. "This won't recoup that, but it will make it easier for us to help others."

United Way Interim President Sheree Mitchell said, "We had a very successful campaign. The community continues to be very generous and we're thrilled to be able to fund so many important programs."

Applications for funding are received by the United Way, then trained teams of volunteers visit partner agencies to see the programs at work and make an evaluation. The United Way Allocation Board then makes the final decision.

Of the 22 agencies receiving funding last year, 65 percent received an increase, 23 percent received the same amount and 12 percent received a decrease this year.

The largest amount -- \$465,250 -- went to the Family Center. Among its programs are personal and family counseling, consumer credit counseling and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Money raised goes in a lot of different directions. The total pledged in the last campaign was \$6,633,899 and additional grants were received for particular initiatives of \$16,639.

Some of the \$4,972,301 was divided among 50 community grants in 24 partner agencies and seven community partnership grants, but \$59,669 was designated to non-United Way partner agencies; \$45,270 went to an in-house program, Hands On the Valley; \$81,013 went to United Way's Community Division supporting programs, such as the VITA coalition, Disaster Coalition, Non-Profit Academy and Born Learning; and \$16,523 went to Fort Benning Soldier and Family Support.

Another \$1,553,161 was designated in a different way, with \$922,449 going for United Way administrative costs, including staff salaries, marketing, materials and training.

Rarely does the United Way get all of the money pledged. Up to 8 percent is usually not collected. In this case, that would be \$530,712.

The United Way Reserve Fund used for partner emergencies is \$100,000. Combined Federal Campaign operational support gets \$125,076.

