

United Way will give out record amount

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Business is booming. But that doesn't make Kim Jenkins happy.

"The number of homeless is really growing locally," said the executive director of Open Door Community House in Columbus. "We're seeing more homeless people than ever, more new faces, more young people."

She said a couple of years ago a banker told her the number of homeless people would increase because of adjustable-rate mortgages. Foreclosures were also coming. She said a lack of affordable housing here and the fact that "drug use has skyrocketed" contributed to the situation.

And the United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley has noticed.

The nonprofit organization announced Friday the allocation of cash from the last fundraising campaign. Open Door, which also has an after-school program for children and a transition home for women in crisis, has received what Jenkins calls "a blessing" -- a \$132,000 allocation, a huge increase over the \$87,000 of last year. Much of that is needed because a new building with more showers has been added for the showering program and Open Door is adding more life-skills training to "empower rather than enable people."

The Homeless Resource Network also received an increase to \$111,414 from \$96,414, the Salvation Army stayed at a strong \$181,000, and The House of Restoration Homeless Shelter in Phenix City was added to the list of United Way agencies to the tune of \$88,000.

Feeding the poor is still a big priority. Second Harvest Food Bank's allocation grew to \$245,000 from \$216,000.

United Way has also become aware of the increase in cases of children being sexually abused, raising the amount of money given to the Russell County Child Advocacy Center to \$81,000 from \$33,000, and the increased number of children with autism, adding the Bridges Learning Center as an agency and awarding it \$42,500.

The largest amount given was \$562,000 to support four programs at the Family Center, one of which is Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

"The United Way is all about changing lives," said United Way CEO Scott Ferguson, adding that because of the generosity of local people, United Way will be able to do just that.

The campaign produced a record \$6,945,000. Allocations included \$5,095,356 for the 26 agencies, \$24,500 for eight community partners and \$10,000 for partnership grants.

About \$1 million will be used for United Way operating expenses. There is a reserve fund for emergencies.

"We practically never get all the money pledged," Ferguson said. "We usually lose about 8 percent."

Even with the money collected, Ferguson and board chair Richard Anthony said all requests could not be met.

Anthony said it was exciting to have so much money to allocate. "There was definitely a lot of energy at the board level," adding that a lot of hard questions were asked by the allocation volunteers to determine where the money should go.

Of the United Way agencies, Goodwill and Columbus Hospice had no set amount announced. Funding for the Urban League of Greater Columbus also increased to \$125,000 from \$73,000 since four new programs are being funded.

2008-2009 UNITED WAY ALLOCATIONS

American Red Cross Russell County, \$123,356

American Red Cross West Central, \$265,070

Boys and Girls Clubs of the Chatt. Valley, \$400,000

Boys and Girls Clubs of Phenix Russell, \$286,000

Chattahoochee Council Boy Scouts, \$225,000

Bridges Learning Center, \$42,500

Children's Tree House, \$75,000

Columbus Community Center, \$102,791

CONTACT, \$195,725

Easter Seals of West Georgia, \$430,000

Girls Inc., \$467,500

Girl Scouts, \$205,000

Homeless Resource Network, \$111,414

Hope Harbour, \$92,500

House of Restoration, \$92,000

Marion County Family Connection, \$56,000

Open Door Community House, \$132,000

Russell County Child Advocacy, \$81,000

Salvation Army, \$181,000

Second Harvest Food Bank, \$245,000

Stewart Community Home, \$315,000

The Family Center, \$562,000

Urban League of Greater Columbus, \$125,000

YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus, \$289,000

Brown Bag of Columbus, \$5,000

Chattahoochee Juvenile Drug Court, \$3,000

House of T.I.M.E., \$4,500

One Columbus, \$1,000

Teen Advisors, \$2,500

Columbus Black History Museum, \$1,000

The Golden Rule, \$4,500

Three Rivers AHEC, \$3,000