

WE ALL WIN WHEN:

- Another child succeeds in school.
- Families are financially stable.
- People have good health.

TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE
WHAT WE SEE IN OUR WORLD.



In Celebration of Volunteers

Please join us at the **United Way of Seneca County Annual Meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 16, to be held at 7 pm at the Waterloo Holiday Inn.** As part of the agenda, we will recognize contributions from amazing individuals who have learned an important life lesson. In appreciation for the gift of your time and expertise, volunteering can help you:



- Make important networking contacts
 - Learn or develop skills
 - Teach your skills to others
 - Gain work experience
- Build self-esteem and self-confidence
 - Meet new people
 - Feel needed and valued

Be a part of community change, you make a difference in someone's life when you Live United!

United Way Worldwide

Adapted from a letter from Chris Catt, former United Way of Seneca County (UWSC) youth board member, now in South Africa as a Rotary Youth Exchange student, who helps us understand the potential for serving universal human needs, as happens in United Way 'worldwide'.



“Many of us ponder the meaning of helping others and the importance of family in our lives. Although I may be 10,000 miles from home and the temperature is topping 95 degrees, the true meaning of the holidays has certainly become more apparent to me through my experiences in South Africa.

As an exchange student volunteering in a developing country, I have had the unique privilege of helping hundreds of children in the Apartheid era township of Alexandra. The Sandown Rotary Club that hosts me sponsors a number of social welfare projects including two nursery schools to which I was able to give my time. These nursery schools provide safe and affordable childcare for underprivileged children in the worst areas of Alexandra.

In addition to providing childcare, the children are taught basic math and English to help prepare them to enter school. Without nursery schools like

Laratong Joy and Belavista most of these children would enter school unable to read or count. The childcare that these sponsored nursery schools provide also allows the children's parents to work and support their families.

Through the efforts of volunteers and generosity of local businesses, gifts and food made a holiday possible for these disadvantaged children. Each child received an age-appropriate gift pack containing items such as soccer balls, dolls, legos, and toy cars. Children also each received a food packet with a hotdog, chips, assorted sweets and an ice cream cone. The vast majority of the children serviced by Laratong Joy have no running water or electricity in their homes. Through volunteering on this and other projects, I have truly gained a new understanding of the less fortunate and a new appreciation for efforts that assist them. Volunteering is an opportunity to assist those less fortunate than ourselves - whether around the corner or around the globe.”



If you are interested in more information about youth exchange please feel free to email Chis at c_catt@yahoo.com.

Campaign Highlights

With an ever increasing role in community and continued development as a Community Impact United Way, we realize that ‘success’ is more than just dollars raised, but without a community campaign United Way would be unable to provide vital support to our funded partners. We are extremely grateful to those who went ‘the extra mile’ for friends, family, and neighbors in our community and here are some highlights:

- A Taste of Spring was a great success with increased vendors AND we raised almost \$14,000. Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 29, 2010!!!
- A matching ‘challenge grant’ from the Stardust Foundation raised \$20,000 in new monies.
- Workplace Campaigns – many successes despite the economy, early retirements and layoffs ...Seneca County Employees – 33% increase last year and another 20% this year; Huntington Living Center – 323% increase;

NYCC – 14% increase over last year; LifeCare – 6% increase and ITT /Goulds Pumps - 9% over their internal goal. ITT Departments with great results: Customer Service – 39%; EPO - 30%; Finance -24%; FRC - 27% over their original goal, so they set a new one!

- School campaigns faced difficult challenges due to early retirements, austerity budgets with little or no salary increase, staff fresh from college with few ties to the community and great debts, and tremendous support for all kinds of needs. Despite all that, we would like to recognize the South Seneca School District as the only school to increase their donations.
- Residential – Congratulations to Waterloo with a 10% increase over last year.

Despite challenges, the constant factor is the tremendous CARING capacity of people in Seneca County to make a huge difference, reaching out a hand to influence the good of all. Thank you for your help!

Options for On-line Giving

One of the most successful aspects of the recent campaign is increased availability and utilization of on-line philanthropic giving available through an increased number of employers who utilize the United Way’s on-line giving services. Through this option businesses are given an address to a customized website, in which employees can log-in to pledge using a username and password.

After a successful pilot effort at IP and FRC divisions of ITT/Goulds last year, this program was made available this year to all of ITT, Seneca County employees, and Seneca Falls School District. South Seneca School District has already expressed interest for next year and we look forward to working with other employers to make this an option. If interested in this campaign tool available to employers, please contact Karen Beals at uwseneca@rochester.rr.com.

Not only do we have a more accurate idea of the campaign progress (reports come in almost hourly), individual donors cite the easy process and appreciate the relative ‘anonymity’ as opposed to filling out our pledge cards to be handed in through co-workers.

Residents also have the option to easily donate on-line via the United Way of Seneca County website. Check it out at uwseneca.org, click on “Donate Now” on the top left corner of the screen. Thank you.

Leading the Way for Community Change...

So what do we mean when we refer to being a 'Community Impact' United Way focused on community change? It is the new way of 'doing business' with a United Way footprint and across the nation, United Ways of all sizes are stepping up to the challenge from the national office – show RESULTS in your community around three pillars of Education, Health and Income focus areas.



Justin being read to through the "Read to Your Bunny" program at a W.I.C. site.

At the United Way of Seneca County, we have fledgling efforts underway around Health and Income, but there is a long history of our efforts around Education and youth development from birth to 21. Much of the community work we are currently involved in aligns well with educational goals and the national strategies, and with help from many partners, we make a real difference in our community when we have:

- 1) Children ready for school,
- 2) Reading on track at grade 4,
- 3) Making successful middle school transitions,
- 4) Graduating from high school, and
- 5) Working or in secondary school by age 21.

Certainly we do not accomplish these outcomes alone, but by working with parents, schools and other community partners, we build supportive communities and strong families around children and youth. Our initiatives help build a solid base for early literacy, promote awareness of resources for assistance, and offer safe places for out-of-school time, where academic enrichment, tutoring and mentoring takes place. It is our shared goal as a community to keep our young adults anchored in schools, graduating on time!

As a 'Community Impact' United Way, the expectation is that we can take nationally identified, research-based strategies and filter those through our own community lens. With your help and active participation, we investigate; work with our funded and community partners to localize the recommended strategies, and we "Live United". We all win when another child succeeds in school, families are financially stable, and people have good health.



**Some "Read to Your Bunny" Volunteers.
Thank you for your dedication!
Left to right: Carol Lord, Kathy Gotham,
Delia Olufsen, Jane Morehouse.
Not pictured: Linda Prosser**

...With the Help of Others!

New this Year: Local Alternative Spring Break (ASB) - The Youth Development Task Force (YDTF) is working on creating a local Alternative Spring Break to take place April 23-24 to coincide with Global Youth Service Day. The service event is open to all Seneca County high school students and former students that attended ASB in 2008 & 2009. During ASB, participants will be rebuilding a Habitat for Humanity house and making it “green”. This will also include planting a vegetable garden, and possibly even building a compost pile.

Second Annual Career Fair for Seneca County Students - Feedback from last year’s career fair was so positive that the YDTF has decided to hold it again. The fair will target youth in 7th and 8th grades that are most at risk, sending them the message “Stay in school, graduate, and opportunities are in your future.” The event will take place on March 26th at Hillside. The YDTF expects at least 30 employers to participate, and at least 150 students total from all four school districts.

Youth Encampment 2010 Being Explored - The first Youth Encampment was held in 2007, and since then students are still talking about how meaningful the experience was to them. As a result, the Seneca County Youth Council, in partnership with the Seneca County Youth Bureau, is exploring the possibility of holding another Youth Encampment. The intent of the event is to conduct an overnight homeless simulation, in which youth will be given the opportunity to experience what it’s like to be homeless by sleeping in a box. The event is expected to take place on May 7th. More details will be posted to the UWSC website, under “youth”.

For More Info About Our Work With Youth Visit: www.uwseneca.org/youth.php

Seneca Falls SURGE Program Re-ceives Nike Grant - SURGE will begin its new Nike programming in January. In partnership with Mynderse Academy coaches, the program will consist of the soccer and cheerleading teams running mini camps with SURGE students one or two times a week. The objective of the camps is to provide mentoring opportunities between middle and high school students.

South Seneca SURGE Program MLK Day Event - South Seneca SURGE will kick-off its STEMester of Service* module during the week of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday in honor of his dedication to community service. At the event students will work with representatives from Seneca Meadows and Cornell Cooperative Extension to learn more about the environment and the values of using a green house and composting. By the end of the module, students will have built a green house and a compost pile, used a hydroponics unit, and perhaps even tended to a garden. The students will also be blogging about their experience and graphing how much waste they were able to put into the compost pile. The blogging website is not yet available, but please look for it at the end of January on our website, under “youth”. *The STEMester of Service program is funded through a grant to UWSC from Youth Service America.

AmeriCorps VISTA Assistance - UWSC received funding to employ a VISTA worker until September 2010. In addition to assisting with all of the above programs/initiatives, our VISTA worker, Jackie Case, has also helped with the on-line giving portion of the annual campaign and some administrative work for Partners for Children, Youth and Families.



UWSC Partnerships Making Progress

While there are times that we are best 'positioned' to be leaders on certain efforts, there are also times when we best 'serve the community' by promoting and strengthening collaborations, working with others for shared outcomes. Here are a couple updates:

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – Once again, we are proud to help build awareness of programs that can help working families claim tax credits they deserve. In continued collaboration with the Seneca County DHS, **volunteer income tax assistance sites will open the end of January**, helping eligible filers save filing fees, and our role is to spread the word. Working families may be eligible for federal and NY state tax credits worth thousands of dollars when they file their taxes for 2009 in early 2010. More than a dozen trained volunteers such as Dick Laude, George Strally, Bob Kernan, and Mike Hryzak assist staff.

We help families take a step closer to financial stability and at the local level, eligible filers with a w-2 in hand, can contact Seneca County at **315-539-1905** to schedule a tax appointment beginning the end of January. For more information about tax savings, check out www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes.

- Earned Income Tax Credit, which helps provide a wage supplement for low and moderate-income families (those earning less than \$48,279 annually). This credit is worth up to \$5,657, and is refundable.
- Child Tax Credit, designed to help families offset some of the costs of raising children. This credit is worth up to \$1,000 per child. Families who owe little or no income tax can receive some or all of this credit as a refund if they earned at least \$3,000 in 2009.

- Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, designed to offset some of the child or dependent care costs that families incur in order to work. This credit is worth up to \$2,100, though the amount that can be claimed is limited by a family's actual federal income tax liability.

Early Literacy – With grateful appreciation to Seneca Falls Rotary Foundation for funding to purchase "Read to Your Bunny", books are now being distributed at W.I.C. sites by retired teachers. It's a 'win' for children, families, United Way, retired teachers who can encourage and mentor young readers and their families. Many hands help build a strong foundation for school success!

The Christmas Project – Again, team work as several UWSC- funded community partners such as House of Concern, and Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency team up with Seneca County DHS to make the holidays brighter.

SURGE - While loss of grant funding has changed the size and shape of this program, efforts continue in South Seneca and Seneca Falls schools where districts were able to offer limited assistance to keep after-school programs in place. UWSC staff, working along with community partners such Youth Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Seneca Meadows, and AmeriCorps VISTA provide safe spaces, academic and social support for middle school students. Of course, we continue to watch for grant opportunities to enhance program.

Domestic Violence – watch for more information in this area from the recently convened subcommittee of the Housing Coalition, as multiple partners bring their expertise to the table. Positive outcomes are sure to come when not only direct service providers, but those with an eye on community needs and issues are working together.

Without a doubt – together we CAN change the 'world' around us in Seneca County!

Board Updates

Women's Leadership

As one woman commented, “the room buzzed with questions and ideas” at the first meeting of the Women’s Leadership Council in November.

Participants heard about women and philanthropy, gained greater understanding of the three pillars of the United Way efforts and were challenged to consider how to use their own interests and talents to increase the women’s role in community improvement in the months ahead.

Thank you to Dede Olufsen for launching this special initiative.



Strategic Planning

With an eye on the future and a commitment to self-assessment and improvement, the United Way of Seneca County board will soon begin a strategic planning process. Over the next few months, work will be underway to:

- clarify the vision, mission;
- identify critical issues and priority focus areas,
- evaluate organizational accountability and effectiveness, and
- implement strategies that guide what this organization is, does and why.

Led by committee members (Dana Allen, Patsy Amidon, Mike Day, Jackie Farney, Mike Hyrzak, Bob Kernan, Bob Pagano, Charlie Schillaci, and Dave Swenson), the work will eventually involve board members, staff, our partners and commu-

nity members. By summer, you can expect to see a completed document that creates a road map for moving forward. Thank you in advance for your assistance if you are called on to provide input not only considering ‘where we are’ but ‘where we want to be’.

www.uwseneca.org

Have You Visited Our Website Lately?

Did you know that our website is full of helpful information that keeps you up to date on what UWSC is doing in our community? It is also an easy and fast way for you to find answers to questions that you may have about UWSC. Here are some other ways you can utilize our website:

- Are you interested in seeing pictures from an event you attended in the past? Check out our photo album, which can be found on the bottom right corner of the homepage.
- Are you willing to inspire others and share how long you have given to United Way? Visit our Loyal Contributor page and tell us how many years you’ve contributed: <http://www.uwseneca.org/give.php?view=contributors>.
- Would you like to learn more about our partner agencies? Go to: <http://www.uwseneca.org/work.php?view=partnering>.
- Did you forget when the next board meeting was, or when the next United Way event was being held? Click through our calendar and save the dates: <http://www.uwseneca.org/calendar.php>.
- Interested in reading a past newsletter? You can easily find them on-line by click on “Media & Resources” on the homepage then clicking on “Newsletters.”

22nd Annual

SAVE THE DATE!

April 29, 2010



Wine & Food Gala
5:30 pm - 8 pm
Holiday Inn- Waterloo

Watch uwseneca.org or email uwseneca@rochester.rr.com for more details.

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