

Mesa United Way needs help to meet goal

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(Photo: Mesa United Way)

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Submitted by Bob Schuster for Mesa United Way.

With just a few weeks left in the 2013-14 pledge campaign, Mesa United Way leaders are praising the individuals and companies that are the backbone of the effort while challenging the entire community to fill the remaining gap.

"We set a goal of \$3 million after meeting last year's goal of \$2,850,000 because needs always exceed what we can raise," said Dan Wollam, Mesa United Way's president and CEO. "Many people in our community are struggling to get by, and even many of those who are able to give are on tight budgets. Whatever you are able to give, we urge you to step up and help fill the Community Chest."

The Community Chest is Mesa United Way's main fund that helps support 46 programs throughout Mesa that serve people of all ages. They are administered by 28 carefully chosen partner agencies, including Save the Family, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, East Valley Adult Resources, Foundation for Blind Children, Marc Community Resources, Salvation Army, A New Leaf, Paz de Cristo and Sunshine Acres Children's Home.

During MUW's annual campaign finale luncheon last week, Wollam reported that the drive is still about \$360,000 short of the goal. The campaign ends June 30.

"Giving to the Community Chest is the simplest and easiest way to help make Mesa a better place by helping those who need our help," Wollam said. "We make sure every dollar makes a difference."

To donate, go to mesaunitedway.org and click on the "Community Chest" under Take Action.

Mesa United Way's Heart of Mesa award this year goes to Udall Shumway Counselors at Law for its innovative ways to boost its campaign every year. This year, Udall Shumway also was the first business to launch a book drive for MUW's new Read On Mesa initiative to encourage summer reading by children.

Other awards:

- Employee Campaign Leader of the Year is Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo, who for more than five years has led Mesa Public Schools' annual pledge drive, which is the largest one in Mesa.
- Community Bridges is the Agency Partner of the Year for increasing its campaign by more than 76 percent and supporting other MUW initiatives.
- Rising Star awards go to Wells Fargo for increasing its giving this year by 29 percent over last year, and to Ford Motor Credit for not only raising money but also conducting food drives for United Food Bank and gift and clothing drives for Helen's Hope Chest.
- Mesa Community College was named Community Partner of the Year for its outstanding educational programs and for assisting Mesa United Way with a number of initiatives.
- Ross N. Farnsworth Spirit of Mesa awards went to Mesa Public Schools and to the late Jim and Vera Dingman, founders of Sunshine Acres, which continues under the leadership of their daughter, Carol Whitworth, and great-grandson Kevin Humphreys.

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