



GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

WINTER 2009

A Community Newsletter for Middlesex United Way

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Middlesex United Way

HOW WILL YOU LIVE UNITED IN 2009?

Each new year brings with it fresh possibilities and opportunities. It is a time for reflection and resolution. But many families in our community are struggling to simply put food on the table, pay the rent, or heat their home. People who never before thought they would need assistance are dialing 2-1-1 for information and referral to services. They are lining up at food pantries and meal sites. They are worried about their future.

Many of us in fact, are concerned about how this economy will affect us and our families. But together, we can change what we see in the world around us. Each of us has the power to facilitate change...to "be the change."

BE THE CHANGE THAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD. -GANDHI

We all can find ways to LIVE UNITED in 2009. If you are in a position to help, please see the list to the right and select one task. Then let us know about it so we can find out collectively how it all adds up. Here are some of the ways to LIVE UNITED in 2009:

• **Conduct a diaper drive.** There is no diaper bank located in Middlesex County and the need for diapers is tremendous.

• **Conduct a food drive.** Food is needed at the food pantries and banks all year long. Plastic grocery bags are also needed.

• **Be a 2-1-1 champion.** Make 2-1-1 materials available at your office for employees and customers. Tell anyone who needs help to dial 2-1-1. Add a link to www.211ct.org on your company's website.

• **Volunteer.** Find volunteer opportunities on our website that match your interests or call us to help you find a group project. Register your profile

and browse volunteer opportunities at volunteersolutions.org/muw/volunteer.

• **Participate in LIVE UNITED Day on Friday, February 13th.** Allow employees to dress down or wear jeans for their donation of \$5. If your work environment

Visit us online at middlesexunitedway.org/liveunited.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WILLIAM E. WRANG, III

MIDDLESEX UNITED WAY BOARD PRESIDENT



As we enter 2009 there are many challenges facing our community, some that would have seemed implausible only a short while ago—unemployment, food shortages, housing foreclosures, and an uncertainty that we have not experienced in generations. But difficult times often bring out the best in all of us. We only need to think back to 9/11 and see how people responded to that terrible tragedy.

This year we are asking everyone to reflect upon how they can LIVE UNITED in 2009. Now more than ever is the time for Middlesex County to come together and help our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family. In this issue of the newsletter we suggest many ways that you and your company or organization can get involved and be part of the solution. You don't have to do everything alone... but decide to do something.

My tenure as Board Chair has come to a close and I would like to extend my thanks to all those who have made the past two years one of the more rewarding experiences of my life. To be involved with so many caring people, both staff and volunteers, who give so much of themselves to make a difference in our community is very humbling. I am confident that the United Way is being left in good hands when Faith Jackson from the City of Middletown formally takes over as Chair at the Annual Meeting.

During my time as Chair I have witnessed our organization transforming from one that simply funds programs into one that creates change in people's lives and communities. Our donors demand it and our community needs it. United Way continues to play key roles in programs and initiatives that advance the common good in the areas of health, education, income, and affordable housing.

I'm particularly proud of our United Way's strong fiscal management. Keeping our costs down and spending limited resources has resulted in low overhead rates year after year. We take our job seriously as volunteers and stewards of donor dollars. Now more than ever we all need to keep a diligent eye on our expenses.

I've always believed that by joining the forces of donors, volunteers, corporate partners, and community leaders we will be able to create opportunities to advance the common good for everyone. Our collective ability to give, advocate and volunteer—to LIVE UNITED—makes me thankful to be part of this amazing community.

FREE INCOME TAX PREPARATION

Middlesex United Way is partnering with several organizations this year to offer free income tax assistance preparation for all people with incomes of less than \$42,000. Our local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site is located at the Literacy Volunteers office on Court Street, next to Russell Library in Middletown. Volunteers who will assist with tax preparation are trained and certified by the IRS.

On average, working families save \$150 in tax preparation fees through VITA. In addition, volunteers are trained to ensure that people are filing for the tax credits they have earned through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. The EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families which often goes unclaimed. As much as \$4,824 could be waiting for those who are eligible for these credits.

Appointments are available from February 5th — April 11th on:

- Thursday evenings, 5-8:00 p.m. and
- Saturday afternoons, Noon-4:30 p.m.

Those interested must call to schedule an appointment! Call 860.347.0337 on:

- Mondays and Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m. and
- Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

You will need to bring several items with you to your appointment. Please visit our website to see that listing at middlesexunitedway.org/site/vita.html.

For additional VITA services in Middletown, call Community Renewal Team (CRT) at 860.347.4465, ext. 227. If you are looking for a VITA site in another part of the state, dial 2-1-1.

NAMES CAN REALLY HURT US

By Susan Murphy, English Teacher at
Old Saybrook High School

Five hundred high school students in an auditorium with an open microphone might be a scary proposition. But that's exactly what Old Saybrook students did as part of a day-long anti-bullying program called *Names Can Really Hurt Us* from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

A team of 52 students and 30 teachers were trained as small group facilitators



The Youth & Family Services Bureau at Old Saybrook High School is a funding partner with Middlesex United Way's Healthy-Communities-Healthy Youth initiative to prevent substance abuse and risky behaviors among youth.

in the weeks before the program. Eight student panelists agreed to share their personal experiences with discrimination, whether as the target, the perpetrator, a bystander or an ally. Panelists spoke of being

rejected, insulted or humiliated because of race, gender, sexual preference, mental health, or even the shifting allegiances of teenaged girls.

The student body listened attentively, bursting into applause after each speaker. Facilitator Dr. Bill Foster of the ADL then opened the microphones and within minutes, long lines had formed. Students spoke of their own experiences with bullying, many thanking the panelists for their courage, some expressing their concern over name-calling in school and over the internet, some apologizing for past behaviors, some thanking friends or teachers who helped them through dark times. Each speaker was applauded warmly; lunch was delayed to accommodate all who wished to speak.

After lunch students broke into small groups, led by students and teachers,

to extend the ideas of the morning's program into the daily life of the school. The students then gathered again in the auditorium to hear the chorus sing John Lennon's "Imagine" and a final talk on the power of being an "ally," one who speaks out against bullying. Before dismissing the students, Principal Scott Schoonmaker, motivational speaker Mark Mainella and Dr. Foster encouraged them to remember what they had experienced that day and praised them for their respect, honesty, and courage.

In a follow-up survey the next day, students recorded their reactions. Here is a sampling of some of their thoughts on the program:

"The most powerful program I have ever seen in my life. It made me feel like I wasn't alone. I wish we could do it once a year."

"I was amazed at how many people apologized for things they have done."

"This assembly...made me aware of the hurtful language I may use unintentionally."

"I have never seen so many students and teachers cry or be moved like this before. This should be a country-wide program."

This program was part of the Old Saybrook Youth and Family Services' Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth initiative, funded in part by Middlesex United Way. United Way is working in 13 of the 15 towns in the county as part of this initiative. Youth Service Bureaus have coordinated after-school programs, developed parent networks, linked students with mentors, developed community service programs and opportunities, and offered mini-grants.

UNITED WAY IS FULL OF SURPRISES

By Eileen Bengtson, Campaign Coordinator for Regional School District #13

There is a plaque that hangs on the wall of my workspace at Regional School District #13. It reads as follows: Coordinator of the Year. I received that recognition from Middlesex United Way in 2003.

I wondered what that term ‘coordinator’ really means. What made *me* so special that year? There must be many other dedicated people in charge of the United Way campaign at their places of employment.

For several years I had heard about United Way but really didn’t know what it was all about. I remember seeing the goal thermometers appearing in the community starting in the fall every year.

I consider 1986 the year that I became “aware” and coordinator of my new employer’s United Way campaign. United Way is full of surprises. It was not just the money. Yes, the money

helps to fund certain needs and projects for many organizations, but it is so much more than that. It’s about the real people who get the help they need and the lives that are touched as a result of our efforts.

As a Coordinator, I have the ability not just to raise funds but to inform and educate my coworkers. I can make sure they know the needs in the community and how United Way and its partners are working to meet them.

In my role, every August I begin my calls to United Way looking for necessary supplies for getting out the word to all of the employees. At the general staff meeting held at the beginning of each school year staff members are encouraged to read and question the information that is available. Presentations vary each year whether it is a short film, guest speaker, or a brochure and other print materials. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

I have found that one of the best ways to LIVE UNITED all year long is through the Families Feeding Families program for the Amazing Grace food pantry. Each one of our schools commits to collecting a specific food item each month and a designated staff member delivers that item to Amazing Grace.

Yes, United Way needs money and I ask every employee to pledge. However, it’s not how much they pledge but how many make the effort. I promote participation. It’s up to each person to decide how they would like to LIVE UNITED by giving, advocating, and volunteering for a cause that’s important to them.

How do I LIVE UNITED? I give, advocate, and volunteer. I am a champion for United Way and all of its funding partners. I hope that all Coordinators set a similar example.

2008 LOANED EXECUTIVES



Many thanks to the Loaned Executives who assisted us with the campaign and to their sponsoring companies. From left to right: Audrey Livingston, sponsored by Middlesex Hospital; Arlene Satriano, sponsored by Liberty Bank; and Mary Lou Kirby sponsored by Aetna and Pratt & Whitney.

Pictured from Comcast are: Russ Carter, Suzy Persutti, Kristen Roberts, and Doug Guthrie.



HOW COMCAST LIVES UNITED: COMCAST CARES DAY. EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERISM. LEADERS AND ACHIEVERS® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. COMCAST FOUNDATION GRANTS.



Comcast joined United Way's National Corporate Leadership program in 2003. Since that time, Comcast employees and the Comcast Foundation have contributed more than \$18 million to local United Ways across the country. For Middlesex United Way, Comcast's Kristen Roberts serves on the Board of Directors and Russ Carter serves on the Finance Committee.

LIVE UNITED™

Want to make a difference? Find out how at middlesexunitedway.org/liveunited.



Middlesex United Way

LIVE UNITED IN 2009 *continued*

already allows casual dress, then consider hosting a special fundraising event such as a bake sale, pot luck lunch, chili cook-off, penny wars, or pizza party.

Whatever way you chose to LIVE UNITED in 2009, please let us know about it by calling 860.346.8695.

To register your food or diaper drive, receive 2-1-1 materials, or to find out more about volunteering, contact Maria Demarest.

If your company or organization can participate in LIVE UNITED Day on February 13th, contact Andy Heuer to sign up and for more information.

The ad above appeared in The Middletown Press on November 20, 2008 on behalf of Comcast's 2008/09 Platinum Media sponsorship.

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LEAVE A LEGACY

Make the generous decision to designate Middlesex United Way in your will, and you will create a lasting change for generations to come.

Your attorney may include a statement in your will such as: "I give and bequeath to Middlesex United Way, 100 Riverview Center, Suite 230, Middletown, CT 06457

- (a) _____% of my estate, (or)
- (b) The sum of \$ _____, (or)
- (c) The following assets or property (describe here), (or)
- (d) All the rest and residue of my estate for its endowment."

For more information about making a planned gift, call Kevin Wilhelm, Executive Director, 860.346.8695 or kevin.wilhelm@ctunitedway.org.



Middlesex United Way

100 Riverview Center
Suite 230
Middletown, CT 06457
(860) 346-8695

**LIVE UNITED Day
is on Friday,
February 13th!**

2-1-1

Need help?
Dial 2-1-1
toll-free to link
to community
services in
our area