

Volunteers and others celebrated at annual United Way meeting

BY SHAKA L. COBB

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Can you see these smiles?" Bryan Macon asked those attending the United Way of Northwest Georgia's Annual Meeting and Volunteer Awards on Tuesday.

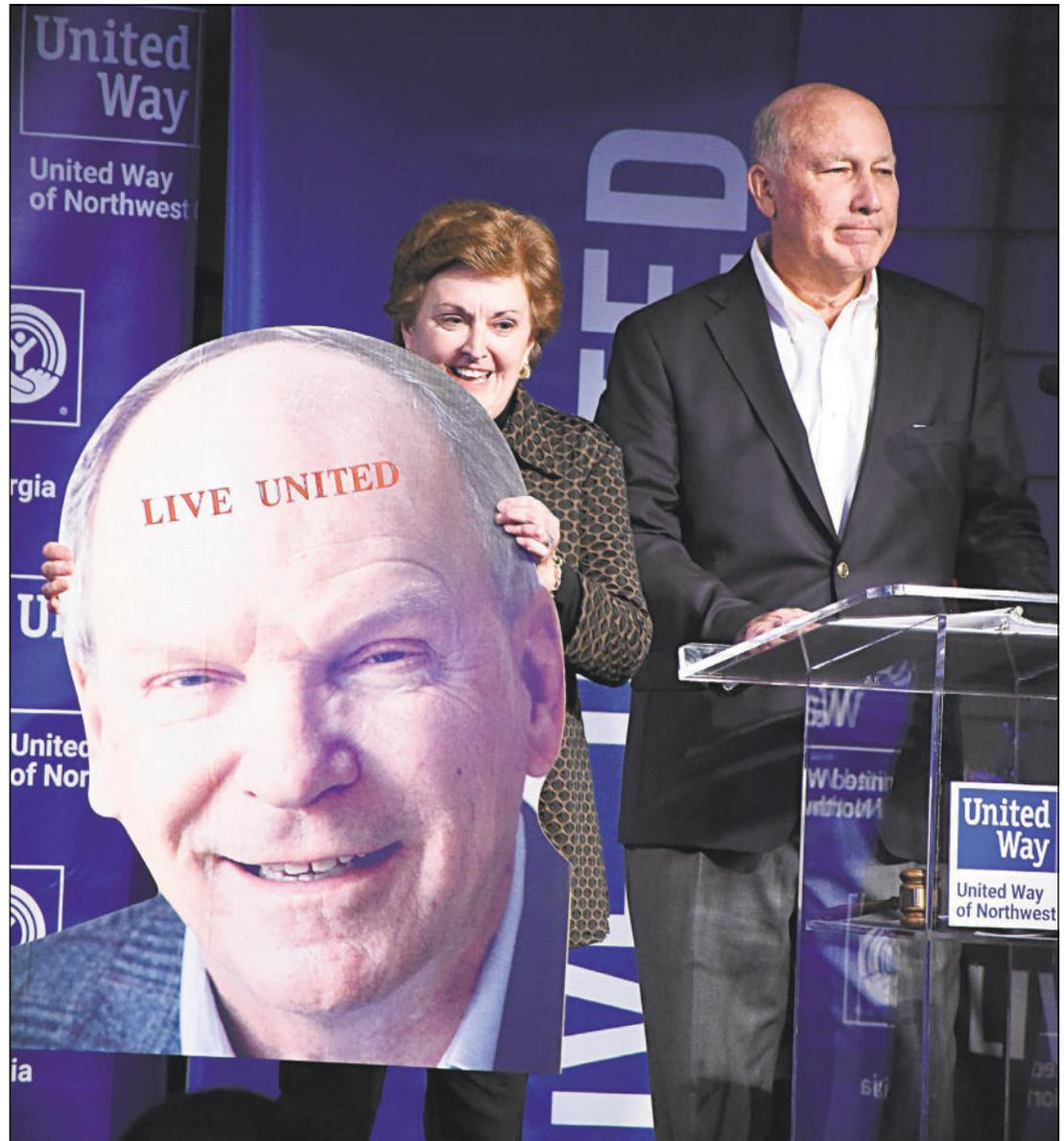
"There is a lot to smile about today. We met and exceeded our \$4.1 million record-breaking campaign," Macon told those assembled at Stage 123 in downtown Dalton. Bryan and Debbie Macon were the 2018 campaign co-chairs.

Debbie Macon said because of the money raised thousands of lives are being improved in Whitfield and Murray counties.

Debbie and Bryan Macon started their first cabinet meeting by sharing the message "Count your blessings and pass them on."

"This theme flowed through the entire year and ignited the passion for improving lives within the campaign cabinet," a press release from

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MATT HAMILTON/Daily Citizen-News

Debbie Macon, co-chair of the United Way's 2018 campaign, holds up a photo of the head of outgoing board chair Ken Jackson with a simulated tattoo of the United Way slogan "Live United" across his forehead as she and her husband, Bryan, also co-chair, present campaign awards on Tuesday.



MATT HAMILTON/Daily Citizen-News
Debbie Macon accepts the Connie Woodward Award for Outstanding Volunteerism in Whitfield County from George Woodward, in honor of his mother, on Tuesday. Read this article online at www.dailycitizen.news for more photos of the event.

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United Way stated.

"The staff are our unsung heroes whose hard work and perseverance makes every year's campaign a success," Debbie Macon said.

Ken Jackson, the 2018 board chair, called the Macons a "dynamic duo."

"They led the charge and gave us much to celebrate," he said.

Jackson said community members always rise to the occasion through volunteerism and by contributing resources.

"It is impossible to have a successful company or business without a healthy workforce and community," Jackson said in the press release. "This is why, I believe, a successful United Way plays a critical role."

Jackson said more than 55,000 lives were impacted by United Way in 2018.

"Simply stated, United Way connects people in need with people who can help," he said.

United Way had almost 3,000 volunteers and saw 20,973 hours of volunteer service in 2018.

Best friends and Northwest Whitfield High School seniors Lily Adams and Catherine Duffy received Elbert Shaw Memorial Scholarships.

"In honor of the legacy of Elbert Shaw's commitment to volunteer service and youth development, Shaw Industries annually partners with United Way of Northwest Georgia to offer two \$5,000 scholarships for high school students," the press release stated. Jackson and John Shaw, Elbert's son, presented the scholarships.

Adams completed 258 hours of volunteer service. She said it was an honor to receive the scholarship.

"It's a very humbling feeling," she said. "The money will help my parents and I out a lot."

Adams plans to attend the University of Georgia in the fall, majoring in communication science with the goal of becoming a speech pathologist.

Duffy, who also received the Youth Volunteer of the Year Award, completed 187 hours of volunteer service.

"It's such a privilege and rewarding to see so many people's reaction from me volunteering," she said. "Volunteering doesn't

require anything, but gives everything in return."

Duffy plans to attend Kennesaw State University and major in nursing.

Jim Hawkins, volunteer center chair, presented outstanding volunteer awards to Melinda Flood and Debbie Macon.

"Every year United Way honors outstanding volunteers as an avenue to shine light on the work of community hand-raisers," Hawkins said. "These volunteers set an example every day."

Flood was not present due to prior obligations but will receive the Elaine Butler Award for Outstanding Volunteerism in Murray County. Butler was awarded Volunteer of the Year for her lifetime service to the northwest Georgia community in 2005. She began working for the Family Support Council in 1988. The award is named in her honor to recognize outstanding volunteerism of an adult volunteer from Murray County. Flood serves in several roles at Murray County 4-H; she was once a student there.

Debbie Macon was presented the Connie Woodward Award for Outstanding Volunteerism in Whitfield County by Woodward's son George. Connie Woodward was awarded Volunteer of the Year for her lifetime service to the northwest Georgia community in 2003. She served with many organizations including the Voluntary Action Center. The award is named in her honor to recognize outstanding volunteerism of an adult volunteer from Whitfield County. In addition to co-chairing the 2018 United Way campaign, Macon volunteers with RossWoods Adult Day Services, Dalton First United Methodist Church and Believe Greater Dalton.

Dorsett Industries received the President's Spirit Award.

"Debbie and Bryan Macon made sure the Dorsett company-wide campaign was ignited this year," the press release stated.

United Way President Amanda Burt said in the press release. "They led by example, as always, with their charitable giving, and offered tours to employees so that they could see how their dollars are working in the community."

Bryan Macon said in the press release that the Alexis de Tocqueville Society raised more than \$1 million

in the 2018 campaign under the leadership of Chip Howalt and Pat Sain. The society consists of donors who give \$10,000 or more annually.

"Over 200 local companies held employee campaigns for United Way, giving their employees an easy way to give through payroll deduction," the press release stated. "In addition, 57 companies made corporate gifts to make lasting change in our community."

Bob Hardaway was announced as the 2019 campaign chair.

Kim Thames, the 2019 board chair, ended the meeting with a video that showed how a United Way volunteer saved a woman's life.

Thames encouraged those in attendance to accept the organization's "call to action — Give. Advocate. Volunteer. Live United."

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