
OUR VIEW

The United Way continues to make our community better

Area residents learned some good and important news on Tuesday when it was revealed that the United Way of Northwest Georgia had surpassed its 2017 campaign goal of \$3.9 million with \$4.018 million raised. That is especially impressive given that 2017 was a tough year locally in some segments of the economy.

According to information from the organization prepared for its Annual Meeting and Volunteer Awards, more than 11,500 individual donors participated, and more than 200 local companies held employee campaigns, providing an accessible way for those employees to give through payroll deduction.

Some 60 companies made corporate gifts. The United Way offers several strategic partner levels, ranging from \$50,000 (community collaborator) to \$1 million (community pillar). Shaw Industries was recognized with the community pillar award.

Matthew Moore, the 2017 board chair, summed up the United Way's mission this way: "Improving lives. Inspiring donors. Uniting community."

One way the organization improves lives and unites the community is by being a clearinghouse for volunteers. The United Way said it "mobilized" 2,954 volunteers in 2017 who provided 24,907 hours of service. It organized 155 volunteer projects, and noted that 371 middle school, high school and college students volunteered through a variety of initiatives, providing 1,270 hours of service.

One such effort, Make a Difference Day, sponsored by Brown Industries and Phenix Flooring, saw 212 volunteers provide 1,089 hours of service.

These are the numbers that quantify the human interactions that saw the United Way benefit 55,168 individuals in 2017, by its count, in the areas of education, basic needs and health. We are indebted to the leadership of the United Way for their efforts, to the individual donors and corporate entities for their contributions, and to the volunteers — several of whom were honored on Tuesday — who willingly give of their time and talents to make our community a better place to live.

The contributions of these individuals and businesses are invaluable and we thank them for all they do through the United Way.

Joe Young was the 2017 campaign chairman and we commend him for his service.

Debbie and Bryan Macon are the 2018 campaign co-chairs and we know they will continue the tradition of excellence that has marked the leadership of the United Way over the years. We look forward to another successful campaign.