

Why I give to United Way

Growing up in a household where I saw both parents frequently giving back, I really never questioned why they were compelled to do so much for others. Whether it was a pair of shoes secretly given to a school principal for a kid in need by my Pop or Mom organizing a monthly "Special Persons" covered dish luncheon for retired senior citizens in the community, I frequently witnessed each of them giving financially and of their time on regularly.

Fast forward to 1991. I was hired as a human resources manager at Shaw Industries. One of my annual tasks was to conduct United Way meetings in our plants. During these meetings, associates were asked to give back to their community by contributing financially to United Way. It was during these meetings that I start-

ed my own contributions, but sadly, it wasn't until years later that I had a clue what this financial support meant. My first "ah ha" moment happened after attending Boardwalk, a class facilitated by United Way to prepare attendees to serve on local nonprofit boards. This ultimately led to me joining the board for United Way community partner, Looper Speech and Hearing.

With the knowledge I learned from Boardwalk and my experience at Looper, I finally started to understand what giving back meant, not just financially, but also of one's time. The final piece of this puzzle came together when Shaw's United Way campaign started conducting impact tours. These tours allowed me to see the many, many needs within our community. Oddly, these tours also

made me reflect on what compelled my parents to give back. It was then that I realized there's always going to be someone in need, maybe one day, even me. Thankfully, our United Way of Northwest Georgia, its community partners and many volunteers help ensure those needs are met!

Today, I have the honor of serving with 70 community volunteers. These volunteers have their own reasons why they give time and financial support to United Way, but we all agree that the role of our team is to ensure that the most critical needs are met in our community.

Community is defined as a group sharing common characteristics or interests that perceives itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists. This definition could not be more true with regard to the expectation of our volunteers, as each are asked to become a liaison for one of the United Way community

partners for a period of six to nine months. Their goal is simple: to help find solutions to problems or challenges faced by the agency.

Today, I'm grateful for a foundation of service set first by my parents and later solidified by the United Way of Northwest Georgia. Additionally, I stand in awe of the volunteers, past and present, who are committed to making our community a better place to live and work. Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

For more information on how you can give back, stop by the United Way of Northwest Georgia or ask any volunteer how you can help make a difference in the lives of others.

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