

COMMENTARY

Take a bow, Dalton

Probably one of the most oft-cited quotes of the last half century was from John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural presidential address:

"And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."

We were reminded of this quote while recently talking to J.T. Finley, owner/operator of Dalton's Maryville Jewelers. Many of you may know Finley served as the 2015-16 United Way of Northwest Georgia campaign chair. It was recently announced that that campaign exceeded its goal of raising \$3.7 million in donations.

Being asked to head up a campaign such as that must be pretty intimidating. After all, that is \$3.7 million with a capital "M"!

But in getting back to the quote at the beginning, once Finley started visiting some of the area organizations that benefit from the United Way he was "blown away" by the stories he heard. He often walked away from those meetings teary eyed, but always motivated. How could he not try to help with a campaign to raise funds to keep those success stories coming and make Whitfield and Murray counties a better place?

Finley is no stranger to



**Werner and
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giving back to the community. He has served as a board member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Georgia Mountains for more than 15 years. He was matched with a 5-year-old "little brother" around that time. That young man is now 20 years old and they still keep in touch and have a relationship.

In fact, it was through Big Brothers Big Sisters that Finley learned about the impact United Way has in our community. (United Way impacted the education, basic needs and health of more than 59,000 children, youth, adults and elderly in Whitfield and Murray counties in 2014.)

He lauds the local United Way staff, their expertise and commitment. He said people may not realize they work long and varied hours, making presentations at area businesses' employee United Way

campaign meetings during all 24-hour mill work shifts.

He also praises United Way volunteers and encourages people who think about volunteering but are reticent to take a leap of faith and jump in.

"I want to tell people 'Don't feel like you can't help,'" he said. "I guarantee that there is somewhere you can help out."

Lastly, Finley shared a story that made him realize the tentacles that volunteering has.

There was a man at the workout center Finley goes to who doesn't really talk to others and keeps to himself. Finley would regularly say "Hello" or "Have a nice day" to the man. One day after doing so, the man got off his exercise machine and asked if Finley was the person he had seen featured in the paper who was heading up the United Way annual campaign. Finley said yes. The man hugged him and shared that his mother had benefited from the United Way for many years.

Sometimes doing for your country or others can make one feel pretty good.

Werner and Mary Braun live in Dalton. He is the retired president of the Dalton-based Carpet and Rug Institute.