

# UWMC News

March 2009

## *United Way's Success By 6 Continues to Grow*

*United Way  
Preschool  
Scholarship Program  
Open to 3 & 4  
year olds*

*Rainbow Route  
Open to all children  
attending preschool in  
the Austin area.*

*Contact United Way  
at 437-2313 for more  
information or  
www.uwmower.org*

It's hard to believe that is the time of year when families begin the process of registering their young children for preschool. It will be 6 months before these kids hit the classroom but it is never too early to begin learning.

Since 2006, United Way of Mower County has sponsored a Preschool Scholarship Program for children in our community who, due to income restrictions, can not afford preschool without assistance. These are the children that quite simply "fall between the cracks".

Thanks to a very generous donation from the Hormel Foundation, the United Way will double the number of children being sent to preschool through the scholarship program. This year the United Way will award a minimum of 40 scholarships. In 2008, 19 children received preschool scholarships.

In addition to scholarships the United Way has worked with AMCAT to provide transportation for **ANY** preschool child in the Austin area. "Transportation is a major barrier for families in sending their children to preschool. We are so fortunate to have the community partners we do in the Hormel Foundation and AMCAT to make the Rainbow Route possible" said Mandi Lighthizer-Schmidt.



There will be 2 buses for the morning route and we looking into the possibility of adding a route in the afternoon.

If you or someone you know is interested in enrolling their child in preschool but has a transportation or financial concern please call United Way at 437-2313. Applications are being accepted for both the scholarship and transportation program.

There is no greater resource than our children. Ensuring the best possible start to their learning will only lead to success for them and the future of our community.

You can learn more about the Preschool Scholarship and Rainbow Route transportation programs on our website at [www.uwmower.org](http://www.uwmower.org).

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# Director's Corner

This fall we began talking about United Way sponsoring a community assessment of assets and needs. Well I'm happy to report that we have begun the process and are now looking for volunteers to serve on three committees.

In February the Community Partnership Steering Committee, led by Geoff and Diane Baker, met for the first time. Steering Committee members include Jaynee Dykes Sherman, Kelly Lady, Terry Taylor, David Sylte, Sandy Forstner, Todd Portinga & Celeste Ruble. The Steering Committee is the governing body and these folks are charged with leading the Community Partnership. The Steering Committee meets on a monthly basis. March's meeting agenda focused on assessment components. The Steering Committee made the decision that an asset inventory was a necessary part of the assessment and to form three working committees; asset inventory, communications and data collection. In April the Steering Committee will be presented with a work plan and a budget. From there this group will begin selecting a group of consultants to help with some of the data collection for the study.

Community members are highly encouraged to participate in this assessment of Mower County. This is **NOT** a health and human service study. This is a community wide assessment of both community assets (what services are available and make Mower County great) as well as what are Mower County's needs and where are there gaps in services. United Way is looking for community members to participate by answering surveys and participating in focus groups.



**Mandi Lighthizer-Schmidt**  
Executive Director

We are also looking for community members to volunteer to serve on the working committees.

Working committees will meet monthly on a schedule determined by the group. If you have any interest please contact me at United Way to find out more. A short description of each committee has also been included in this month's newsletter to help explain the purpose of each committee. Volunteers of **ALL** ages are encouraged to join.

As the sponsoring organization United Way's role is to set up meetings, provide space and communicate with volunteers. It is not a United Way assessment, it is a community wide assessment and United Way really wants the public not only to be aware, but have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

We will continue to update you on the process as we move along.

## Community Assessment Committees

*Inventory:* Identify capabilities and associations of area organizations

*Marketing and Communications:* Grant writing, community communication, etc.

*Data Collection & Analysis:* Create surveys, focus groups, data collection & research

## United Way Annual Meeting and Victory Party

The United Way's 50th Annual Meeting and Victory Party will take place April 14, 2009.

The event will be held at the SPAM Museum beginning at 5:30pm with the Annual Meeting, followed by a reception and celebration to thank all our contributors and community partners for their support. We will also announce our 2008 fundraising total to the public during the reception.

If you would like to attend the United Way Annual Meeting please give our office a call at 437-2313 and we will be sure to mail an invitation out to you.



Community members enjoy visiting and eating at the 2008 Annual Meeting/Victory Party

## Day of Caring Date Changes But Not It's Mission

Day of Caring is moving on down the line to fall. Traditionally Day of Caring has been held the 2nd Saturday of May.

“Our board felt that moving Day of Caring to the fall to coincide with our campaign kick off would be beneficial to Day of Caring recipients as well as volunteers.” said Mandi Lighthizer-Schmidt. “Community Clean Up Day and Day of Caring serve the same purpose in the community and were

only two weeks apart. By moving Day of Caring to the fall each event maintains it's integrity and we can better serve the community.”

An official date has not been selected but as soon as the board decides we will get that information to everyone. In the meantime you can start thinking about gathering friends, family and co-workers together to form a team.

## Volunteer Opportunities Abound

We have shared with you many times in our newsletter about Volunteer Solutions, a web based resource for finding and listing volunteer needs in Mower County. As the weather warms and we venture out of our caves after a long winter season now is a great time to find a volunteer opportunity for you, your family, organization or co-workers. Many organizations in our community rely heavily on volunteers to

assist them. The beautiful thing about volunteering is you can do it when you have the time, for the time you want and you will be richly rewarded for helping others.

To list volunteer needs for your organization or to see who could use your help visit our website at [www.uwmower.org](http://www.uwmower.org) and click on VOLUNTEER.

### Community Assessment Committee Volunteers

The United Way of Mower County is looking for volunteers to serve on Community Assessment committees.

\*Inventory

\*Marketing & Communications

\*Data Collection & Analysis

To learn more about each committee or the Community Assessment in general, visit our website at [www.uwmower.org](http://www.uwmower.org) and click on Special Initiatives.

**2009  
Get Fit  
Healthy Living  
Challenge**

Watch for information  
regarding STAY FIT.

**Our goal is to help you  
Get Fit, Be Fit and  
STAY FIT.**

**For more details  
visit our website at  
[www.uwmower.org](http://www.uwmower.org)**



★ **Mower County Healthy Living Challenge** ★

Get Fit officially came to an end on March 10th with the final weigh out for Team Challenge participants.

The United Way will hold a press conference on Thursday, March 19th at 12:00pm at the YMCA to announce winners and award prizes. There will be one overall Get Fit Team winner for , one overall Get Fit individual winner, one Be Fit winner and one Family Challenge winner. Some of the prizes being awarded are Health Market Baskets from Hy-Vee, a bike from Rydjour Bike, gift certificates from The Edge Salon, Games People Play and South Central Athlete, an iPod and more.

Thank you to all who participated. We hope through the Get Fit Challenge you are on the road to a healthier lifestyle and life long improvements.

**United  
Way**



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of Mower County

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