

# Column: United Way meets \$8.3 million goal



**Jim Collar**, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

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(Photo: Dan Powers/Post-Crescent Media)

Strong communities don't just happen.

Strength requires investment, and in the Fox Cities, residents have come through once again for their neighbors and the greater sense of "we."

The United Way-Fox Cities is celebrating after achieving its \$8.3 million campaign goal.

Peter Kelly, president and CEO of the United Way, said it's a cause for the region to celebrate. Agencies and programs that benefit from United Way funds will touch 1 in 3 Fox Cities residents in the year ahead.

The campaign was a team effort and marked with enthusiasm to do good on behalf of others.

"A job like mine is made easier in a community that cares," Kelly said.

Programs that have benefited from United Way donations include Menasha's Even Start Family Literacy Program. It's designed to help at-risk families – whether its preparing young children for kindergarten or helping their mothers or fathers attain a high school equivalency degree.

United Way provided a \$300,000 grant to the Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity for its Rock the Block program. That program is aimed at neighborhoods struggling with falling property values and a growing number of rental units. In upcoming years, the organization will build and rehabilitate homes with the goal of turning around those neighborhood trends.

Funds will go to community service initiatives such as United Way's 211 information and referral service. Donations will further benefit the efforts of more than 100 agencies.

The 2015 campaign was led by Tom Riordan, president and CEO of Neenah Enterprises, and Mike Weller, of Mike Weller and Associates. It was capped with a Jan. 27 celebration at Fox Cities Stadium.

Kelly said the campaign's success once again demonstrated the importance of community to Fox Cities residents. The community is small enough for donors to look around and take note of why giving matters.

"We see the value of our gifts and we see that we make a difference," Kelly said.

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