

United Way Fox Cities launches \$8.75M campaign

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United Way Fox Cities vice president of marketing and communications Nanci Micke was the keynote speaker at the 2017 community campaign kickoff event Aug. 29, 2017 in Appleton. Shane Nyman/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

APPLETON - A month after 27 people were found without a place to stay for the night in the Fox Cities, the issue of homelessness was front of mind on Tuesday at the annual fundraising kickoff for United Way Fox Cities.

"Never before have we needed the kind of help we do now," said Miron Construction president and CEO David Voss Jr. "People are hurting in the Fox Valley.

"We are a community and we take care of those in our community."

Voss announced a goal of \$8.75 million for the annual fundraising campaign at a kickoff event held at SECURA Insurance. A group of about 200 community members were on hand.

Among the indications of that need were the results of the most recent point-in-time count, held on July 26. That's where 27 adults were found having to spend the night outdoors.

Point-in-time counts are conducted twice a year by agencies from the Fox Cities Housing Coalition. A year before, the number was 13.

On average, the Fox Cities is said to have about 350 people experiencing homelessness. That includes those living in emergency shelters, transitional housing or domestic violence shelters.

The Tuesday kickoff event's keynote speaker, Nanci Micke, vice president of marketing and communications for United Way Fox Cities, talked about the different ways data is collected to identify areas of need in the community.

Project RUSH — Research to Understand and Solve Homelessness — is a project guided by local housing agencies that counts United Way among its funding partners.



(Photo: Photo illustration)

In a survey of more than 500 people who are either homeless or at risk for eviction, it found 57 percent had been told by a medical professional they had a significant mental health condition. Half of those said they were receiving the treatment and support they need.

Joining other United Way groups around the country, United Way Fox Cities is part of a research program called ALICE — Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — which helps measure the number and conditions of households struggling to afford basic necessities.

An ALICE report found that 42 percent of Wisconsin households don't earn enough to provide the five essentials of food, housing, child care, health care and transportation.

United Way will help the fight against homelessness with two new grants — \$25,000 will go to Homeless Connections to help clients gain stable income and find financial stability and \$15,000 will go to Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities for the It Takes a Village program, which helps people find stable, permanent housing.

Another area of need the organization continues to address is mental health services. The LIFE Study, conducted every five years by the team of United Way Fox Cities, the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region and the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry, revealed in 2006 that 25 percent of high school sophomores experienced depression and 14 percent said they'd attempted suicide.

A school-based mental health program called PATH for Students was launched nearly 10 years ago and has served 1,385 students, Micke said.

"United Way touches the lives of one of every three people who live in the Fox Cities," Micke said. "We will never know who most of those people are. We will not know their names or faces, but we do know that we are making a difference every day."

The United Way Fox Cities fundraising goal for 2016 was \$8.45 million and donations reached nearly \$8.5 million.

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