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MONDAY'S MAN

## Building relationships in new United Way role

Cole Whobrey brings skills from banking in return to nonprofit

ANDREW CRITCHELOW The News-Enterprise Feb 18, 2018 Updated Feb 19, 2018



United Way of Central Kentucky Vice President Cole Whobrey just started his job earlier this year, but the United Way mission is one that was close to him long before he took on the role.

Whobrey's involvement with United Way started in 2012 when he joined as a VISTA member shortly after his graduation from Western Kentucky University. During his year-long tenure, he worked on developing a program called Bank On.

Bank On brings local financial institutions together to help unbanked and underbanked individuals in Hardin, Grayson, LaRue and Breckenridge counties establish low-cost bank accounts and receive financial education.

Megan Stith, president of United Way of Central Kentucky, said Whobrey was instrumental in getting the program started.

"Cole was uniquely able to engage people from a wide variety of backgrounds, financial institutions, nonprofits and those in need," she said. "Serving as a VISTA for a year is a challenging task but he went above and beyond to make a lasting impact during that time."

Whobrey said he was proud of his part in establishing the resource in the community.

"It was at first intimidating to walk into some of the financial institutions but it was the right thing to do, and that's what kept pushing me to move forward," he said. "I'm so happy that they came together."

Following his tenure working with financial institutions, Whobrey eventually ended up working within the industry. He was hired by First Citizens Bank, which became United Bank and Capital Trust in 2013.

Whobrey worked in the financial sector for five years, providing relationship and risk management services.

Whobrey said he hopes to bring some of the skills he learned in the financial sector to his new position.

After spending years forming client relationships as a career, Whobrey said this skill will come in handy when it comes to the community outreach required in his new job. He said the attention to detail he learned while working in the banking industry also will come in handy.

"I look forward to taking everything I've learned in the financial sector and hopefully applying it here as well," Whobrey said.

Stith said the skills translate when it comes to reaching United Way's goals.

"Cole provided excellent customer service during his time with United Bank, which is one of the most critical skills for our staff," she said. "We are 100 percent reliant on local funding and support, so his talent for building relationships will allow him to deliver the best experience possible for our donors and volunteers."

Whobrey began his role as UWCK vice president in January. He said he was excited to again work in a nonprofit role.

"I clocked out for the last time on a Friday and started here that following Monday," he said. "I just tried to take the bull by the horns you could say and just hopped right in."

Whobrey succeeded former United Way of Central Kentucky Vice President Dana Garrett, who accepted a teaching job. He said he's looking forward to continuing her successes in the organization.

"I'm trying to keep the momentum Dana had built and just continue to run with it," he said. "In the time that I was away, United Way morphed and evolved a little bit to better help the community and I'm just in a position where I'm learning all the new information and about the great volunteers that have come and gotten involved since I've been away."

Whobrey isn't the only member of his household who works with United Way. He said his wife Kendia volunteers for United Way's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, helping individuals file their income taxes. Whobrey said he and his wife have been helping with United Way programs since his time as a VISTA member.

"They were just such a good conduit for the needs of the community," he said. "We can turn there and just find a volunteer opportunity right away."

Whobrey said one of his favorite things about the job so far has been the different tasks each day brings. He said one day he could be going to work places to campaign and fund raise, whereas the next he could be doing research for the assortment of United Way's programs.

"If you want variety, this is the place to be," he said. "Every day is different. From year to year, there's similarities but people you're meeting and the things you're doing, the needs are ever-evolving and changing."

Ultimately, Whobrey said, his favorite thing about the job is what attracted him to United Way in the first place: helping people.

“There’s these great resources out there and people may not know about them,” Whobrey said. “I want to make sure there’s that opportunity.”

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Updated Feb 19, 2018