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New Mexico businessman named next United Way CEO

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Incoming United Way of Central Kentucky CEO Ron Eppes talks with Rachel Watkins at Wednesday's Hardin County Chamber Commerce monthly luncheon at Pritchard Community Center in Elizabethtown. He was announced as the new CEO during the luncheon.

BECCA OWSLEY/The News-Enterprise

Following a nationwide search and more than 50 applicants, the United Way of Central Kentucky found its next CEO in Ron Eppes.

Eppes, of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, previously worked as community engagement manager for Intel New Mexico. He said he has wanted to be a part of United Way because of how the agency brings communities together to work on local issues.

“(We work to) make ourselves a better community,” said Eppes, who starts Oct. 1.

He was introduced Wednesday at the Hardin County Chamber of Commerce monthly luncheon. United Way also kicked off its annual giving campaign at the meeting.

Eppes also was involved with a range of nonprofits and community organizations during his 18 years in New Mexico. He said the local United Way’s strong board of directors, fundraising growth and focus on key issues such as workforce development drew him to the Elizabethtown-based nonprofit.

Interim CEO Christa Shouse said Eppes had the experience and vision to take United Way into the future.

Eppes, who has a background in computer programming, has served in various roles with United Way of Central New Mexico since 2006.

He replaces Megan Stith, who resigned in June to become dean of institutional advancement at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College. During Stith’s four-year tenure as executive director, the organization implemented new programs, set fundraising records and focused its resources on specific community issues and needs. The recent annual campaign raised \$1.4 million, a record for the local United Way.



Stith reflects on four years at helm of United Way
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The goal for this year’s campaign is \$1.5 million.

Jon Ballard, chairman of the local United Way’s board of directors, said Eppes will help build on Stith’s work and expand it to move the organization forward.

“You can’t rest,” said Ballard, who is superintendent of Elizabethtown Independent Schools. “You can’t accept the status quo.”

Ballard said Eppes’ work in community development stood out as well.

“He’s going to be an exceptional addition to our community,” he said.

Eppes oversaw Intel New Mexico’s workplace campaign, bringing in more than \$3 million annually. He also worked on the national campaign and helped to raise \$26 million one year, he said.

Eppes is moving to the area with his wife, Peggy. They’ve been married for 30 years and have three adult children. Eppes said he’s a runner and has qualified for the 2019 Boston Marathon.

As a transplant, Eppes said he plans to get out and be involved in the community to help people get to know him.

He said he strives to be the most positive person in the room.

Eppes is joining United Way during its busy season as the annual giving campaign ramps up. He expects in his initial months on the job to be a resource for staff, not their boss, as he learns about the organization and community.

“I think I’ll be drinking from the firehose for awhile,” he said.

Katherine Knott can be reached at 270-505-1747 or kknott@thenewsenterprise.com.

Katherine Knott

Katherine Knott is an education reporter with The News-Enterprise.