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United Way works to help community

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1 of 3



Chad Sarver, 2018 campaign chairman and incoming board chairman, speaks Thursday evening at the United Way of Central Kentucky campaign kickoff event.

MARY ALFORD/The News-Enterprise

United Way of Central Kentucky patrons were treated to a night of fun and fellowship Thursday as the organization held its campaign premiere.

The fundraising kickoff event at The State Theater in downtown Elizabethtown allowed guests to walk a red carpet and have their photo taken. Those in attendance were introduced to the United Way of Central Kentucky's 2019 campaign chairman, watched a premiere of the 2019 campaign video and were given a look at the past year and the year ahead for United Way.

Ron Eppes, president and CEO, said the organization exists to fight for the health, education and financial stability of every person in Meade, Breckinridge, Grayson, LaRue and Hardin counties.

“We are here to help those that are here without hope to make sure that everyone has a voice and has a way to move forward in our communities,” he said.

In 2018, Eppes said UWCK served more than 59,000 clients in the organization’s five-county area. That total includes more than 8,000 veterans and 12,000 seniors.

Last year’s campaign raised \$1,285,624 and Eppes said contributions came from 3,500 donors and included 95 businesses.

Those numbers are why Eppes said he is excited and passionate about United Way.

“It’s why I want to work for the United Way of Central Kentucky,” he said. “Because when we talk about United Way, it is not about one or two of us doing it or a small group of people doing it, it is our community. It is all of us being united together to say, ‘Hey, how are we going to help make our community a better place?’”

Chad Sarver, 2018 campaign chairman and incoming board chairman, said he wanted to thank all the businesses that have allowed them to have campaigns and all the donors who have “given of their time, of their money, of themselves, their hearts to really something greater than themselves.”

Sarver said it always has been about getting more people involved.

“I know that if we get more people engaged, we will continue to grow and prosper and we’ll continue to be the community we all want it to be,” he said.

Tracy Schiller, retired Elizabethtown police chief and the 2019 campaign chairman, said his involvement in United Way stems from his law-enforcement career.

“In police work, I spent the vast majority of my time making runs that were symptoms of great problems,” he said. “It didn’t matter what the call was, it was always the same issues. ... Issues related to drug abuse, finances, the fact people simply don’t have enough food for their families, they don’t have the skills necessary to get gainful employment. All of these things are the underlying problems. Things police run into every day.”

Schiller said United Way's goal is to alleviate those problems as much as they can.

"The money that you all have worked so hard to raise for United Way goes to address these problems and, for that, I cannot thank you enough," he said.

He said it is unfortunate the community still has people in need. Last year, he said they were about \$520,000 short of meeting every need request that was out there.

"My request for 2019 is to leave no request unanswered," he said. "I know the only way for us to make that happen is for us to continue this work together."

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