

Pushing towards our goal

The game is being changed! I am happy to report that United Way of Northwest Georgia campaign chairman Brian Anderson and our cabinet have raised one-third of our \$3.55 million campaign goal. Thank you to companies who ran early campaigns and already booked



Amanda Burt

pledges. These campaigns help set the tone and the example for other companies to make CEO gifts and corporate gifts as well as run employee payroll campaigns.

We have seen game changing successes in several of our largest accounts. Shaw Industries' campaign, led by Joel Hughes, featured an all-day leadership kickoff with more than 600 associates attending a walk-through event on the game board of real life while playing a few real games for fun. Mohawk Industries' campaign, led by David Toney, with lots of help and legwork from our board member Jamie Welbourn, kicked off early this year and mobilized a large team of advocates to tell the United Way story in presentations across the company. Initial reports show that Mohawk's United Way of Northwest Georgia campaign is up about 20 percent over last year. This is truly game-changing.

J+J Flooring Group campaign chairs Pat McCoy and Josh Hall organized very engaging presentations for all associates, including leadership and Young Leaders meetings. I am looking forward to J+J's final results because their company historically has very high participation with more than 80 percent of their employee giving.

Thank you to Dorsett Industries, which wrapped up their campaign with 89

percent of employees giving to United Way, which is outstanding. Bryan Macon and Stan Goodroe are strong supporters.

Ben Kinsey and Timmy McNeese led the Dalton Utilities campaign, which posted an increase of 5.51 percent. This is a great increase for a

mature campaign that is already very strong.

I am excited that both Whitfield County Schools and Dalton Public Schools hosted leadership campaigns this year. Murray County Schools also ran a strong United Way campaign. Thank you to all the companies and individuals who give so generously each year. This year we are continuing to focus on working with companies to become 5-Star United Way Champions. So what does that mean?

- No. 1: It means the CEO supports the campaign with a personal gift and a corporate pledge

- No. 2: The right people are appointed to the team to run the campaign;

- No. 3: Employees go on United Way tours to see their investment at work;

- No. 4: Employees are asked to give, the campaign is up over last year, and results reported back to United Way by Oct. 31;

- No. 5: The company has employees who volunteer with United Way through corporate volunteer programs, board service, etc.

Some companies have already met the 5-Star criteria. 5-Star companies will be recognized at our annual meeting in March, so you still have time to achieve all these goals. We have been amazed by the popularity of our leadership societies. If you are not yet a Leadership Giver, I invite

you to join me with your investment. For just \$100 a month, or \$20 per week, a person can become a leadership giver. Many of our leadership givers and Alexis de Tocqueville donors have already answered our challenge to increase their personal gift by 10 percent.

Blake Gober, from BB&T, shared at our recent kickoff about the United Way Young Leaders Society,

"Young Leaders is a great way to get out of the office and help the community," Gober said. "Our group of 246 members have monthly events ranging from lunch with community leaders, professional development workshops, networking events, and volunteer projects. Bill Davies and Charlie Bethel launched the United Way Young Leaders Society in 2006, as a way to engage the next generation of volunteer and philanthropic leaders for our community."

"Current co-chairs Curtis Callaway and Amy Cole along with the 15 member steering committee, which I am a part of, design and plan YLS activities. Young Leaders Society is a great beginning point for charitable giving. I invite you to join. YLS members give a household gift of \$365 or more annually. We know how important it is to retain our community's young professionals. Young Leaders Society wants to help."

Rachel Fisher, a plant manager at Shaw Industries, spoke about the benefits she gains from our Women's Leadership Council,

"On a personal level, I have enjoyed the connection to other women through this giving circle. Women's Leadership Council is a great way to reach out to other women in the community, to share, and to learn. I invite anyone interested to join," she said.

Women's Leadership Council boasts more than 268 local members, which is pretty impressive. Currently, WLC is chaired by Dixie Kinard, Lynn Whitworth and Karen Townsend. Our members represent all backgrounds including professionals, business, leaders, community volunteers and philanthropists. These women energize around improving education, basic needs, and health in our community by investing \$1,000 or more annually. Women's Leadership Council represents those truly generous in heart and spirit who bring vision, energy, talent, and creativity to create lasting change through United Way. I know great things are in store because our 2014 Campaign Cabinet is a power team: Brian Anderson — campaign chairman; Bob Chandler — Alexis de Tocqueville Society; Bill Davies — Junior Alexis de Tocqueville; Blake Gober and Delyn Ellis — finance division; Curtis Callaway — Young Leaders Society; Lynn Whitworth — Women's Leadership Council; Doug Schneller and Bob Hardaway — textile division; Celeste Creswell and Mike Stein — professionals; Howard Elder and Werner Braun — individual giving; Mark Buckner and Kasey Carpenter — commercial division; Kevin Sanders and Pete Sigmon — new business; and Bob Ringer — leadership.

I invite you to invest in your co-workers, neighbors and friends. Together, we can advance education, basic needs, and health in our community. You can change the game. Give. Advocate. Volunteer. Live united.

Amanda Burt is the president of United Way of Northwest Georgia.