

Everyday superheroes filling gaps

On a warm fall day, CEOs from competing floor-covering companies, a local bank and the hospital gathered on Hamilton Street in downtown Dalton. The reason? To see who could pedal a tricycle the fastest.

Not that any of them really cared. Well, a few did. But, mostly, they came to show support of our local United Way.

These CEOs showed up after work, donned a United Way T-shirt, a blue superhero cape and jumped on a tricycle.

United Way is embraced by local companies. Belief in our mission is strong and supported from the plant floor to the corner office.

This is why our United Way is so successful. We have worked hard to gain the trust and confidence of the local business community. They have opened their doors to us annually for employee campaigns — and throughout the year — for employee volunteerism.

United Way had over 400 community members downtown for the 3rd Annual Superhero Sprint and 2nd Annual CEO Trike Relay through downtown Dalton. Congratulations to the overall winners of the Superhero Sprint, Jonathan Sierra of J+J Flooring Group and Grace Anderson of Dalton Middle School. A full list of all winners and individual race times can be found at www.ourunitedway.org/superhero-sprint-ceo-trike-relay.

The Superhero Sprint & CEO Trike Relay were well supported and a very visible representation of the connectedness that is the fabric of our United Way. Visit Facebook.com/unitedwayn-wga for pictures of both events. Curtis Callaway from Shaw Industries captured on video his company's struggle to overcome riding a tricycle with a broken peddle. Check out Shaw Industries on YouTube.com to view the

video.

Thank you to all the participants, and a special congrats to Beaulieu of America for taking home the CEO Trike Relay cup. CEO Trike race teams included:

■ **BB&T:** Bill Davies, Blake Gober, Joel Etheridge and Chris Pierce.

■ **Beaulieu of America:** Carl Bouckaert, Stan Bouckaert, Ralph Boe, Karel Vercruyssen and Nicolas Bouckaert.

■ **Brown Industries:** Stuart Nelson, Rick Klein, Tim Holt and Kenny Sheppard.

■ **Dalton Utilities:** Don Cope, Ben Kinsey, Craig Bock and Seth Lassitter.

■ **Engineered Floors:** Zack Adamson, William Young, Joe Young and Clay Shaw.

■ **Hamilton Medical Center:** Shawn Molsberger, Steve Rohn, Danny Wright and Todd Harrison.

■ **IVC:** Xavier Steyaert, Paul Murfin, Barrett Hagood and Micah Riggle.

■ **J+J:** Doug Schneller, Tom Pendley, Ross Leonard and Josh Hall.

■ **Marketing Alliance:** Bryan Hair, Landon Hair, Frank Grant and Raj Kapur.

■ **Mohawk:** Jeff Lorberbaum, Joe Yarbrough, Brian Carson and Cathy Diksa.

■ **Shaw:** Hal Long, David Morgan, Pete Sigmon and Brenda Knowles.

■ **US Floors:** Piet Dossche, Julian Dossche, Rachel Dossche and Sam Ruble.

Another one of my favorite moments of the 2013 campaign festivities was Alison Lebovitz's inspirational message at the Super Power Luncheon at the trade center.

"I don't want you to give to United Way; I want you to want to United Way,"

Lebovitz, a TV personality and author, shared with an audience of nearly 300. She ceremoniously removed her jacket on stage to expose her black LIVE UNITED T-shirt and whipped a bright red cape out of the podium and continued to share her passion for United Way and improving lives.

"United Way of Northwest Georgia is successful, not because of the community's charity, but because of the community's benevolence," she said.

"The people in this room don't give because other people are in need; you give in anticipation of need."

At the event, United Way Campaign Chairman and all-around superhero Bob Ringer and the Campaign Cabinet set United Way's fundraising goal at \$3.5 million, a 4.5 percent increase over last year's goal of \$3.35 million.

Ringer encouraged the audience to get involved, saying, "Each and every one of us in this room, and others in our community, can help fill these gaps. I have a great team of everyday superheroes: the 2013 Campaign Cabinet and our awesome account executives."

Ringer continued, "I would like to thank Oriental Weavers and their CEO Ahmed Salama for sponsoring the 2013 United Way Kickoff."

Ringer invited companies to increase their United Way engagement by becoming a 5-Star United Way supporter. The steps for companies to achieve this recognition are:

1: CEO supports the United Way campaign with a personal gift and a corporate pledge.

2: The right people are appointed to the team to run

the campaign.

3: Employees go on United Way tours to see their investment at work.

4: An employee campaign is held and results reported back to United Way by Thanksgiving.

5: The company has employees who volunteer with United Way, either through corporate volunteer programs, board service or individual opportunities.

Ringer continued, "One of our strengths is our Alexis de Tocqueville program, led by Joe Yarbrough, which accounts for approximately 23 percent of our campaign each year. United Way has plenty of opportunities for you to get involved, including silver, gold and bronze leadership levels, Women's Leadership Council, and our Young Leaders Society. I want to thank Kevin Sanders, Lynn Whitworth, Dixie Kinard, Karen Townsend, Matthew Moore and Amy Cole for stepping us to lead these giving 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. We have met many needs, but there are still gaps to fill. Remember, you don't have to wear a cape to be a superhero.

Many local companies offer their employees the option to give via payroll deduction. You can also give online at ourunitedway.org, stop by the office at 816 S. Thornton Ave. in Dalton, or mail a check to P.O. Box 566, Dalton, GA 30722.

Thank you to all the donors, volunteers and superheroes who fill the human service gaps in our community.

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



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