

Volunteers are a community asset

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

— *"The Lorax"* by Dr. Seuss.

Our 2017 campaign chair Joe Young opened his first campaign cabinet meeting this year with this quote. It set the tone for our volunteers who work diligently to help us meet our fund-raising goal.

United Way can easily be summed up by saying that we connect people who need help with those that can help them.

The biggest way we accomplish our mission is through our annual campaign. With funds raised locally, United Way is able to improve lives of more than 59,000 people in Whitfield and Murray counties each year. But United Way would not be the powerful community force it is today without volunteers.

We have many volunteers who work on our campaign

each year, serve on our board or serve on panels to ensure each dollar raised is used in the most efficient and effective way. We also have an in-house Volunteer Center governed by a Volunteer Center Council (VCC). This council mobilizes corporate and community volunteers, provides leadership development opportunities for youth and adults wanting to have a lasting impact and recognizes outstanding service.

Over the years, thousands of people have volunteered through United Way's Volunteer Center. There are many wonderful stories of volunteers making connections to our community and finding a new passion. One that stands out for me is the story of Samantha.

Samantha is a participant at the Murray County Development Center. She came to the center a little over three years ago. She never really spoke to anyone

when she was in high school or when she started attending at MCDC. After a short time, she began to bond with some of the staff and then the other participants. Two years ago, a group from Shaw Industries came to volunteer. Samantha had never spoken with anyone other than MCDC staff or participants, but she made a connection with a volunteer from Shaw. For the first time, she spoke with someone new. Samantha now spends longer periods of time interacting with others. She loves to participate in group activities of her choosing, and she loves to make cards for friends and family.

The volunteers from Shaw "cared a whole awful lot" and what a difference it made! On Oct. 27-28, I invite you to make a difference, too. Each year, United Way participates in Make a Difference Day. This year, sponsored by Brown Industries and Phenix Flooring, Make a Difference Day features eight projects.

Projects are:

■ Construct a mountain

bike park at the Chatsworth Unit of the Boys & Girls Clubs.

■ Landscape the mountain bike track at the Boys & Girls Clubs Carl Rollins Unit in Dalton.

■ Paint at Carter Hope Center.

■ Help with the Fall Festival at Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center.

■ Create a sitting garden at Westside Elementary School with the Young Leaders Society.

■ "Home Sweet Home" — fill laundry baskets with household items with the Women's Leadership Council.

■ Spruce up the grounds at United Way of Northwest Georgia.

■ Conasauga River Watershed Clean-Up.

On Oct. 27-28, 550 volunteers are needed to Make a Difference in our community. Join the hand-raisers and game changers who are improving lives. Visit ourunitedway.org/mdday to learn more.

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



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