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**UNITED WAY OF OTTER TAIL**

**For Immediate Release**

## Press Release

### **UNITED WAY NEEDS SUPPORT FROM RESIDENTS NOW MORE THAN EVER.**

**Fergus Falls, MN November 29, 2007:** The United Way of Otter Tail County has raised \$215,000 — just over 60% of its \$360,000 campaign target.

The 2007-08 campaign was launched in September with the theme, “We Change Lives.” Additional needs requested from partner programs necessitated that the goal be raised from the 2006-07 figure of \$335,000

“The demand is so great for non-profits,” said Mary Phillipe, Interim Executive Director. Thirty four non-profits throughout Otter Tail County receive United Way dollars. Funds raised are allocated to programs throughout the county – not just Fergus Falls. In fact, even though close to 80% of the donated dollars come out of Fergus Falls, just 40% are allocated to Fergus Falls agencies. Last year, the Pelican Rapids area donated just under \$21,000, receiving \$43,700 for local and cross county programs. “We are hoping to see the Pelican Rapids area (Erhard, Vergas, Dent, Frazee, Bluffton) bring in at least \$40,000 to support the campaign.” Phillipe adds.

The current tally so far just tops \$15,000 plus an additional very generous amount of \$6,000 from the Pelican Rapids School District. “The Pelican School District really steps up to the plate by donating the highest dollar amount out of any Otter Tail County school district – they are so supportive and really wonderful to work with.” states Teresa Dahlstrom, Campaign Assistant.

“It’s so important for residents to realize how much their own community residents and agencies are supported by United Way. The Pelican Rapids Food Shelf is one example, “just over 200 individuals (unduplicated) were served last year, each typically requesting help four times per year. Not only does the food shelf provide food, but also, resources and programs that encourage self-sufficiency.”

Pelican Rapids OAKS also benefits from United Way dollars. This non-profit agency reaches out to elderly residents, providing assistance with household chores, paperwork, transportation, social activities and advocacy. One more example of working to remain independent

The Lutheran Social Service Refugee Program received United Way support as well. Refugees, asylees and immigrants find this program supportive as they integrate into the community. Agency staff is able to work with agencies such as banks, clinics, law enforcement, employers, social

services, etc. by cutting through the red tape, making connections, providing translators and alleviating worry. This much needed program supports **one quarter** of the community.

United Way dollars enrich the lives of Pelican's senior population as well. In their eleventh year of operation, the Senior Center and its Meals on Wheels program, deliver a variety of hot meals Monday through Friday to residents that are unable to leave their home. Frozen meals are also delivered for the weekend. In addition to the Meals on Wheels program, the center provides a noon meal at the center, where seniors are able to enjoy conversation and friendship. Last year alone the center served over 80 residents, unduplicated, providing over 20,256 meals

Along with a direct mail piece to every single household, a downtown business blitz was held in early November with the help of the Pelican Rapids Public Library, who provided a base location for staff and volunteer Maggie Driscoll, Pelican Rapids OAKS Program Director. "We really couldn't have done it without her- we are so grateful for her help - she's a real team player." says Teresa Dahlstrom, Campaign Assistant.

"It's not just about a quick fix or meeting needs anymore," Phillipe said. "It's about creating community impact and changing lives, helping adults and families thrive in the community, giving children a healthy start, it's about giving people the tools they need to create that change on their own."

To volunteer, make a donation or request a speaker for your business or service club, call the United Way office at 736-5147. Donations by check may be sent to United Way, P.O. Box 54, Fergus Falls, Minn., 56537. Online giving is also available at [www.uwotc.com](http://www.uwotc.com).

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