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UNITED WAY OF OTTER TAIL

For Immediate Release

Press Release

UNITED WAY NEEDS SUPPORT FROM OTTER TAIL COUNTY 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 Phillippe, 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% of them were allocated to Fergus Falls agencies. Last year, the Perham area donated just under \$30,000, receiving \$41,700 for area agencies and cross county programs. "We are hoping to see the Perham area (Vergas, Richville, Dent, New York Mills, Ottertail and Frazee) bring in at least \$45,000 to support the campaign." Phillippe adds. The current tally just tops \$23,000.

"It's so important for residents to realize how much their own community residents and agencies are supported by United Way," states Phillippe. The Perham Area Community Center is one example, "just under 40% of families are unable to pay program fees for recreational and/or after-school activities". United Way support changes that. Dollars allocated to the PACC provide scholarships for youth to participate in after school activities, Fit Chix and also, to gain general access to the center. "Having the same opportunities as your peers is huge for self esteem." Says Teresa Dahlstrom, Campaign Assistant.

Perham Kinship also benefits from United Way dollars. This non-profit agency provides that extra measure of encouragement to help youth develop a satisfactory self image and sense of worth. This is accomplished with area mentors that spend quality one on one time with a child. Also provided is an after school program that includes group mentoring on life skills, relationship building and nutrition. Ninety six youth (unduplicated) were served last year alone.

The MILLS Impact program received support monies to nurture and enrich the lives of families through health and wellness programs. Some examples are: summer enrichment classes, youth activities, pool scholarships, summer reading programs, art classes and outreach.

United Way allocated \$1200 to the New York Mills Food Shelf in 2007. Operating since 1992, the program provides an emergency supply of food to people with little or no food and/or resources. There were over 350 individuals (unduplicated) served in 2007.

Along with a direct mail piece to every single household, a downtown business blitz was held in early November with the help of the PACC, who provided a base location for staff and volunteers. Volunteers visiting local businesses were Marie Hanson representing the PACC along with three students from the School to Work and Peer Tutor program. "We really couldn't have done it without these wonderful volunteers – we are so grateful for the support." says Teresa Dahlstrom, Campaign Assistant.

"It's not just about a quick fix or meeting needs anymore," Phillippe 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.

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