

Annual Report

This has been an interesting year - and quite a full and busy year and on reflection, is an indication of how much Starke United has grown and is working towards the next step of evolution! We have quite a different complexion to our board, what with 5 new members added last April and then 2 more members during the year and with the annexation of Communities in Schools, we have Judge David Matsey on the Board representing them.

The new board members have stepped up to the plate, are willing to work to fill the hole left by the 5 veteran members who retired off of the board last spring and are bringing some new insights to Starke United.

We have been a part of several new adventures in Starke County - serving as fiscal agent for Communities in Schools (CIS) and for the Tobacco Use Prevention Committee.

Through these 2 programs, we are carrying 3 employees: for CIS, we have Ember Ison who is the part time School Agency Coordinator with Kelly Manning volunteering her time as Executive Director and for the Tobacco Use Prevention Committee we have Director Camille Cummins and Shannon Salyer.

Communities in Schools will be an ongoing process and will remain with Starke United until they receive their own 501(c)(3) non-profit status, and the Tobacco Use Prevention Committee is based on a grant from the state Indiana Tobacco Prevention Committee, and will last through the end of 2003.

We have done quite a bit of collaborating with area United Ways and other agencies this year. The Indiana Association of United Ways (IaUW) and Lilly Endowment has made available grants for various reasons - if you worked together with at least 3 other United Ways or funds. If you will recall from last April, we told you of a grant collaboration with Lake, Porter and La Porte County United Ways in which we recruited a group of retirees to make up a Retiree Council. Starke County was represented by Bill Sonnemaker and Ted Dreiser - 2 new and very good friends to Starke United. The entire committee met many times over the past year determining what would be the best approach to take to attract retired individuals to donate again - or for the first time with a campaign dubbed "Don't Retire from Giving". They put much time and energy into creating a letter and a brochure that targeted retired individuals and was flexible enough to be adapted by each of the 4 counties. They successfully wrote a white paper that presents this program for use to other United Ways/Funds across the state. They worked very well together considering the vast differences between the make up of the 4 counties. I personally think that we had the most outstanding representation there.

The second collaboration grant was with what we are now calling the North Central Collaboration Group (La Porte, Marshall, St. Joseph, Elkhart, and new this year Kosciusko counties). This was the 3rd year that we have participated in this grant. This has traditionally been a marketing grant for campaign time. This was the main focus again last year, but also built in is a look to the future. We set aside funds to hire a marketing consultant who would meet with the group, listen to all of our marketing needs and come up with a program that we could all use in the future to market our campaigns. Bj Thompson and Assoc. out of Mishawaka was chosen as the consultant and they are currently working through the information they we all drowned them in and working along with the marketing program that has recently been put out by United Way of America and revising it to meet regional needs, our new campaign theme for 2003 will be "What Matters? Results."

We have also worked with the United Way of La Porte County to take advantage of car seats that the United Way of America was making available through a program called Boost America. Kathy Robb from Healthy Families had questioned me about this program 2 years ago. Well, we were finally able to get 100 backless booster seats for Healthy families to add to their inventory -- at no cost.

In November we worked with the Community Foundation and the Retiree Council and provided a luncheon to retirees where they heard from an investment advisor on the best way to set aside money for their future, their children's future and their favorite charity's future - making all three areas winners.

Right now, we are representing The Salvation Army in Operation Compassion from the Homefront. Not only are we collecting items for distribution to the troops in the Middle East, but we are keeping the name of Starke United in the public's eye and showing that we are not just around during campaign time, but that we are working around the year to help support the agencies and people of Starke County.

Our Partnership Luncheons that we hold quarterly in conjunction with Step Ahead have continued to be a success as an arena for the various service agencies to get together and share projects, ideas and training.

Our Grant Writer grant from Lilly Endowment wrapped up at the end of September. It was a good experience. We contracted with Arrow Head Country RC&D to continue the newsletters started under the grant for another year - ending this fall.

Our committees and board members have been busy this year:

Our Board Chair, Mayor Nancy Dembowski, became Senator Nancy Dembowski, and has had to miss meetings this winter due to her new duties in Indianapolis. Senator Dembowski wishes to stay connected with Starke United and is willing to remain on as Chairman as long as her senator duties allow her and as long as it does not interfere in a negative way with Starke United progress. We think that she will be able to successfully balance all of her commitments. In her absence, Vice Chairs Lynette Altman and Gene Blastic have stepped to the plate to run the board meetings.

The Resource Deployment committee met in April of last year to recommend distribution of \$31,000 of undesignated funds. There were 26 applications received for a total of \$116,630.00. Obviously, this committee had its work cut out for it. Also, it is obvious that the ability of Starke United to help has been discovered and appreciated by service organizations that serve the residents of Starke County. This is why we need to push and push to make Starke United a household name throughout the County so that when campaign time comes around each year, we will have more and more folks get involved monetarily to help us to support all of these fine programs.

The Caring Close to Home Campaign kicked off at Chesapeake Run in September and the luncheon was a great success! It was the first time that we charged for the luncheon and we had the best turnout we ever had. The campaign, as Gene has told you - was a challenge and a great success. Gene and his team did a superb job - surpassing the goal of \$110,000 and making many new friends in the process.

Many ideas have been discussed by the Board this year - IN211, a state wide - actually nationwide - information and referral service where anyone would be able to dial 211 and they would be linked with someone who could direct them to a service agency to fit their need. This is already up and running in some parts of the state. We have talked about taking credit card payments for pledges, impact funding, accountability, membership in the United Way of America, mission and values, media awareness, and endowment building. Many of these issues came out as a result of a board

retreat held in September and well attended by the Board members. Many issues to consider and discuss and to act on over the next year - and beyond.

A little about where we are and where we are going:

We have - as of yesterday - a working website! www.starkeunited.org. This is courtesy of the Retiree Initiative Grant - it will highlight more and more ways that retirees and all of us can work together to better this community. My vision for this is to not only promote Starke United, but also the agencies that work in Starke County. You can go on-line to find help, offer to help, make a pledge, and to see what's happening in the nonprofit world of Starke County. I hope that it will be a useful tool for us all.

This summer you will see us at all of the festivals in the county and at the County Fair. We will share time and space with other organizations and I plan on having a summer long raffle to spark additional attention to our organization.

As you can see, Starke United is a living, growing organization. You are the wonderful volunteers that make it happen. We have many wonderful supporters in the county and hope to continue to grow and expand and reach out to do as our Mission statement says: "To provide leadership in uniting all people of Starke County to address human conditions....."