

Good Morning! Wednesday, August 26, 2009

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Ed Herbert, 2009 Campaign Chairman, gets the campaign off a high powered start Friday during the Local Kick-off at Rotary Park. (Tony Duncan / Johnson City Press)

## United Way fundraising campaign kicks off

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United Way of Washington County on Friday kicked off its annual fall fundraising campaign, setting in motion a three-month drive to raise \$1.95 million for 17 area service agencies under this year's campaign mantra "Everyone Can Make a Difference."

To start the ball rolling, Campaign Chairman Ed Herbert announced \$447,848 in early contributions from 35 campaign "Pace Setter" companies and their employees, which starts the drive off at just under 23 percent of the \$1.95 million goal.

United Way Board President Mark Eades thanked the Pace Setter companies and their team leaders for "what you have done and what you are about to do."

In a unique campaign kickoff speech set to the tune of "This Moment" from the musical production of "Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde," Herbert sang of the opportunity "to make a difference in the lives of as people as we can," the United Way campaign provides.

"Starting today, this day, this moment, this is the day, this is the greatest moment truly, for everyone to make a difference," Herbert crooned. "The pace setter companies did it. The agencies do it every day. And the United Way can not stop until we've helped all we can. ... We're going to make a difference."

Herbert said later he often sang for different churches and ministries and will be using "every trick I have" throughout the campaign to show "everyone can make a difference."

"This year we're not asking people to give more. We're asking more people to give. That's what this campaign is doing," Herbert said.

Speaking on behalf of the governing bodies of Johnson City, Jonesborough and Washington County, Johnson City Mayor Jane Myron read a joint proclamation declaring Friday Washington County United Way Campaign Kick Off Day in recognition of the significant impact on community development and empowerment of individuals the United Way makes through its cooperative fundraising appeal for the area's health and human service organizations.

Coming on the heels of some disappointment in last year's \$2.075 million campaign that fell several thousand dollars short of its goal in the midst of the economic downturn, United Way President and CEO Lester Lattany said the United Way board members had been careful to set "a goal they felt the community could embrace."

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To help get the job done, Jonesborough artist Bill Bledsoe unveiled the annual United Way of Washington County Campaign Image, "ETSU Clock Tower." Signed, limited edition prints will be given to campaign supporters who make individual contributions of \$500 or more.

Tours of the 17 area service agencies supported annually by the United Way campaign will be available throughout the three-month fundraising drive.

Agencies designated to receive support from this year's campaign are Adult Day Services, American Red Cross of East Tennessee, The Arc of Washington County, Boys & Girls Club, Coalition for Kids, Contact Ministries, Family Support Services, Frontier Health's Adventure Program, Girl Scouts of the Appalachian Council, Girls Inc., Interfaith Hospitality Network, Johnson City Schools Shoe Fund, Keystone Dental Care, Salvation Army, Sequoyah Council of Boy Scouts of America, The Volunteer Center and Washington County Schools Food, Shoe and Clothing Fund.

For more information about the campaign, to make a contribution or to schedule an agency tour, call the United Way at 282-5682.

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