

UW Drive Kicks Off; Goal Is \$3,123,000 *by Jimmy Myers*

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The United Way of Greater St. Joseph's 2002 fund-raising kickoff breakfast on Friday had plenty of optimism. Now it's time to collect the money.

The United Way increased its goal this year to \$3,123,000. It'll spend the next two months working toward the goal in its effort to fund local service agencies like the Boy Scouts, Catholic Charities, the YMCA and YWCA, and InterServ, among others.

Last year, the charity exceeded its \$3,071,000 goal by \$14,000.

And last year's success – despite the Sept. 11 tragedy and the spiraling economy – provides the optimism for this year's campaign.

Chuck Hamilton, president of St. Joseph Packaging, is this year's campaign chairman. He said it is imperative this year's campaign is a success, regardless of the still-stumbling economy.

"This promises to be a challenging year," said Mr. Hamilton on meeting the campaign goal. "But how can we not (meet the goal)? There are too many people counting on us."

The Pace Setter Campaign, a precursor to the September-through-November campaign, has garnered about \$550,000.

Barbara Wurtzler, president of the United Way, said the pacesetters began their campaign a month prior to the kickoff and that they were successful this year.

"I think that's a good sign for our community," Ms. Wurtzler said. "That allows us to begin the campaign with a little inspiration from others who have been successful."

The kick-off was held at the Ramada Inn with hundreds of people in attendance, including representatives from the 17 local partner agencies funded by the United Way.

Motivational speaker Joel Zeff combined his talent for improvisational comedy with his experience in the corporate world in a presentation designed to focus fund-raisers' energy on positive thinking, communication, teamwork and creativity.

"The only way to be successful," Mr. Zeff said, "is to be open and flexible to change...We cause ourselves stress because we aren't prepared for change."

Mr. Zeff included members of the audience in improvisational skits to demonstrate the communication process in the workplace.

Ms. Wurtler said this year's fund-raising strategy was basically outlined by themes in Mr. Zeff's presentation: focus, attention to detail and working with passion.

"Those are the exact things we need to do," Ms. Wurtzler said. "He was right on target."