

# United Way kicks off Bucks Knock Out Hunger campaign

By PEG QUANN  
STAFF WRITER

Team effort has propelled the United Way of Bucks County's success in helping those in need for the past 65 years, says Brian Jeter, chairman of the UW board.

Friday's turnout of more than 250 people for the kick-off breakfast for the United Way's Bucks Knocks Out Hunger campaign marked the start of the next 65 years of doing good for people throughout the county who need assistance, he said.

"It's really a wonderful collection of community partners," Jeter said as the anniversary breakfast concluded at the Spring Mill Manor in Northampton. "We really had a strong business showing today."

The United Way plans to prepare 100,000 meals and provide more than 54,000 pounds of local produce, lean proteins and dairy products to local pantries this year through the BKOH effort.

On June 30, hundreds of volunteers will descend on Delaware Valley University for a day of packing non-perishable meals that those in need can easily heat up to prepare when needed. The meals will include pasta, oatmeal and other healthy grains as well as tomato and other sauces.

People can sign up to volunteer to pack meals and/or donate to the United Way's goal of raising \$75,000 to cover the cost of the project, which will help 10 percent of Bucks County's residents — of which 16 percent are children — the agency says are food insecure.

The United Way is looking for super-heavyweight sponsors willing to donate \$2,500 and businesses and/or organizations that can host coin canisters to raise additional funds, said Tim Philpot, director of community impact for the organization. Those at the breakfast were invited to sign up as volunteers for the food packing day, and the signup will be open to the public Wednesday at <http://bit.ly/BKOHunger2017>.

Marissa Christie, the United Way of Bucks County's new president and CEO, told the gathering that



(File) Volunteers with the The United Way of Bucks County Knocks Out Hunger campaign gather in 2016 at Delaware Valley University in Doylestown Township to pack 100,000 shelf-stable meals.

KIM WEIMER / PHOTOJOURNALIST

United Ways throughout the country "are experiencing challenges in the way people want to give," but that the local organization has streamlined its donation priorities.

"People prefer to have options (for donations), not just through their workplace," she said. "They want to give to specific causes."

Because of this, the United Way allows them to choose a charity of their choice or to allow the United Way to use the funds for its Impact projects, which alleviate hunger and food insecurity or provide for early childhood care and education, emergency needs, benefits and financial assistance for seniors or information and referral services to offer a "one-stop shop" so those in need know where they can get help.

"Our donors and stakeholders tell us that they appreciate the importance of narrowing and defining the United Way's focus in Bucks County," she said in a letter to UW supporters.

As part of the new focus, the agency will start a street outreach to try to help the more than 500 people who are homeless in the county on any given night get shelter and eventually housing. "It costs more to leave the people on the street than to

help them," said Matt Uhler, UW Impact director of financial stability.

Christie said the outreach will launch later this month in an effort to get the homeless into rapid rehousing or into shelters, since communities that have "housing first" initiatives see significant savings in medical costs for those living on the streets as well as in judicial and police expenses in clearing encampments and preventing crime involving the homeless.

On Friday, UW staff member Danielle Bush, director of community and volunteer engagement, also thanked the donors who gave to the United Way's Stuff the Bus program to collect school supplies for children and its "Shed" beside its headquarters in Falls — where people can get housing supplies and linens.

The organization lauded several businesses for their support over the past year, including Avery Dennison, Waste Management, GE Water and Distributed Power division in Lower Southampton, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Wegman's, Dow, Johnson & Johnson, Bucks County Bank, BB&T bank, Illinois Tool Works (ITW), Covenant

Bank, Customers Bank, QNB, and the Pennsylvania State Employee Combined Appeal.

Barnes and Noble was also honored for providing 43,000 books to children from low-income families and St. Mary Medical Center in Middletown was honored for providing several programs to assist the underprivileged, including a new food mobile that will take fresh produce to low-income neighborhoods.

Cherie LaTorre, who works with Bucks County Early Intervention, won an Impact Award for her work providing services for children, especially those with special needs.

The Kelton Service Award, given in honor of the late Stanton Kelton, was presented to Todd Alderfer, a senior vice president at QNB, for his "exceptional contributions" over the past year in helping staff with fundraising efforts and developing leadership giving. As part of the award, he got to name a charitable organization to receive a \$1,000 United Way donation. Alderfer chose the

Family Services Association of Bucks County.

Michael B. Connor, who is retired from Bucks County Bank, won the Paul Sauerbry Award for his 10 years of service to the United Way in overseeing its

finances. "It was a very nice honor. I was surprised when they told me I was going to get it," he said.

The Bucks County Courier Times and The Intelligencer were honored for their role in reporting on issues in Bucks County related to United Way services.

"Raising awareness of a change in federal funding that would create a gap in delivery of human services was our job to do, and we did it," said Amy Gianfaro, director of communications for Calkins Media, parent company of the two newspapers. "Finding a way to close that gap, thankfully, was a job the United Way and its partner agencies wanted to do, and they have a plan in place to do it. It's how a healthy, compassionate community works. We are glad to do our part and appreciate the United Way's recognition for it."

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