

Guest Op Ed for Campaign 2016

“Connecting Our Community” was chosen as the theme of the 2016 United Way of Central New Mexico (UWCNM) fundraising campaign because it so aptly describes the role and purpose of this organization. As United Way looks to its future, we invite the community to share ideas of how we can fulfill our mission to bring people and resources together to measurably improve lives and strengthen our community.

Continuing challenges, such as educating our young people, providing for family stability, and caring for those who are vulnerable, require us to provide thoughtful responses that truly address how to fundamentally change conditions. In 2017 (and beyond), United Way of Central New Mexico will be examining how it can deepen its ability to address some of our community’s most persistent problems. We thank those who have taken the time to talk with us about the opportunities to affect real and lasting change. We’re calling this effort our Community Impact Agenda and look forward to continued conversations about the kind of changes most needed in our four-county region.

The UWCNM Community Fund is central to UWCNM’s efforts; more than \$3.6 million will be distributed to local programs in annual and multi-year funding in 2016-17. Those programs in turn reach hundreds of thousands of people in a multitude of ways. United Way also brings communities together by providing resources. Our 2-1-1 Information and Referral Service, Tax Help New Mexico, Center for Nonprofit Excellence and the Family Advocacy Center are excellent resources that provide for particular needs. UWCNM’s total programmatic support (including the Community Fund) is almost \$6.8 million – a considerable force for helping others in our region.

United Way of Central New Mexico connects the community through initiatives and programs that require the community to investigate, propose and enact solutions *as a community*. Collective impact measures, such as Mission: Graduate, are by definition shared processes. UWCNM is proud to provide the “backbone” support for this important initiative. Mission: Graduate brings together hundreds of volunteers and organizations to drive systemic change to reach the ambitious goal of gaining 60,000 more graduates (with post-secondary degrees and certifications) in our communities by 2020.

I had the honor of leading the annual campaign this year. I was fortunate to work with companies and individuals who value their partnership with United Way to improve the community. Like any city, the greater Albuquerque area doesn’t lack for challenges, but more than 30,000 donors, partners and volunteers demonstrate the caring power of our neighbors each year with their gifts. That spirit of giving is something we can all be proud of.

We are grateful that so many donors agreed to include giving of at least 10 percent of their total gift to United Way in their contributions. We also appreciate the continued support of Corporate Cornerstone donors and will continue to champion their interest in making the greater Albuquerque area a better place to work and live.

We invite you to participate as a donor, volunteer, or advocate of community improvement. If you have given as part of your workplace, thank you. If you'd like to organize a giving effort for your company, we can offer support at the level needed.

Be a part of "Connecting our Community" the United Way!

Submitted by:

Jason Harrington, CEO of HB Construction; Chair of the 2016 Campaign Cabinet

United Way of Central New Mexico was founded in 1934. To learn how you can give, advocate or volunteer, visit www.uwcnm.org