



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Way of Southeast Mississippi kicks off annual campaign

Hattiesburg -- United Way of Southeast Mississippi kicked off its 2009-2010 fund-raising campaign today with a lunch event at Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center. Campaign Chair Dr. Annie Wimbish, superintendent of Hattiesburg Public Schools, announced United Way's overall campaign goal to be \$1.75 million.

“Once again we are excited about the kick-off of a new campaign because it gives us another opportunity to help others in the community,” Wimbish said. “We recognize that times are tough with the economy being as it is, and the goal of \$1.75 million is a huge challenge. However, when times are tough, needs are even greater for many. Thus, I do believe that our community will meet the challenge.”

At the “boot camp” themed event, volunteers were divided into groups representing different branches of the military. Each group heard a personal testimony from a United Way agency recipient and reviewed campaign strategies.

The money raised in the community-wide campaign will fund United Way of Southeast Mississippi's 21 local partner agencies in Forrest, Lamar and Perry counties. Already, over \$522,000 has been raised in this year's Pacesetter campaign, which took place during the month of August. Pacesetters are organizations that hold their United Way employee giving campaigns earlier than the overall campaign to build momentum. This year's Pacesetters were Anderson Design Center, BancorpSouth, The First, Forrest General Hospital, Hattiesburg Clinic, Mississippi Power, Pine Burr Area Council of Boy Scouts, Regions, Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative, Wesley Medical Center and Zeon Chemicals.

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Wimbish added, “The level of excitement observed from the Pacesetters has been encouraging and promotes a belief that this wonderful community will unite as a whole and support the meaningful work of United Way agencies.”

At the Campaign Kick-off, members of United Way’s Campaign Cabinet were recognized as well. In addition to Anderson and Wimbish, other members of the Campaign Cabinet include Curt Jones of Regions Bank, major firms chair; Jim Smith of Grand Bank, mid-size firms chair; Dr. Ben Burnett of Lamar County Schools, education chair; Derek Arrington, attorney with Jackson, Bowman and Blumentritt, public service chair; Chris Martin of Hattiesburg Clinic, new account development chair; Bill Hickman, community volunteer, account revitalization chair; Glenn and Gayle Galey and Al and Dora Willis, Grand Givers Society co-chairs; Kaye Ray and Iola Williams, retirees co-chairs; Becky Sims of Domestic Abuse Family Shelter, agencies chair; and Kemi Simmons of Grand Bank, communications chair.

United Way of Southeast Mississippi is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization that provides funding to 21 local health and human service agencies. United Way’s campaign will continue until November 6. The money raised in the campaign comes mainly from employee donations, usually made through payroll deductions; corporate gifts and special events. To begin a workplace campaign at your business, call (601) 545-7141; or for more information, visit www.unitedwaysems.org.

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