

United Way is short of goal

Christian Hill

The United Way of Thurston County is about \$200,000 short of its goal with about two months left in its fundraising campaign, Executive Director Pam Toal said.

The nonprofit organization increased its campaign goal to \$1.5 million, a 15 percent increase over last year, to account for the increased financial needs of its funded agencies, Toal said. The campaign runs from September through March.

"We do know we've been impacted by the flooding and some economic pressures," she said.

Many people have donated to help the victims of severe flooding in early December, and the nation's economic woes might have prompted others to forgo or reduce a contribution to the United Way this year, she said.

Greater needs

Meanwhile, local organizations supported by the United Way are seeing greater demand for services.

Directors of funded agencies reported a 50 percent increase for dental appointments and a 48 percent increase in enrollment for after-school programs, according to a January "mini-survey" by the organization.

United Way funding is critical for the Keystone Crisis Nursery, a service of the Child Care Action Council. The council, which serves Lewis, Thurston and Mason counties, provides referral and resources to people who need child care and trains child-care providers.

Keystone provides free child care for families dealing with an emergency.

"We see women escaping domestic violence who need just two days to handle their court case," said Annie Cubberly, the council's executive director.

The nursery gets more discriminating on which emergencies qualify for its help as the budget shrinks, she said, and has had to turn some people away.

With no state money, the nursery relies on local contributions — and those are more difficult to come by now than four years ago, when the nursery was new, Cubberly said.

Applications for funding

Agencies invited to apply for the next two-year cycle of funding must submit applications by March 7.

"We're just seeing a lot more need in the applications," Toal said.

The United Way of Thurston County commits to providing funding to agencies for two years. The fundraising campaign is an annual event.

The contributions to the United Way of Thurston County help pay for 48 programs provided by 34 nonprofit agencies that deliver services in the county.

The agency has mailed letters to local businesses seeking further support, Toal said.

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