

CHATHAM CHAT | UNITED WAY OF CHATHAM COUNTY

Chatham's United Way funds agencies to nurture, strengthen community

The United Way of Chatham County is the largest annual provider of funds to Chatham's nonprofit entities. This week, we speak with its executive director, Dina Reynolds, about the United Way's 30-year commitment to supporting community organizations that provide a variety of services to individuals and families in Chatham who need help. Reynolds has called Chatham County home for more than 25 years. A graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, she holds a B.A. in Journalism, as well as a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Duke's Continuing Education Program. She has worked in nonprofit fundraising and administration for 22 years — the first eight years as the Director of Development for the Chatham County Council on Aging and the last 14 years at United Way.

What is the United Way of Chatham County?

Established in 1990 through the efforts of Fearrington Village residents, the United Way of Chatham County is a local, independent, nonprofit organization that supports local resources to address Chatham's most critical health and human service needs.

We fund local nonprofit agencies that provide human services to county residents. The funding focus areas include Assisting with Basic Needs, Nurturing Youth & Family, and Strengthening the Community.

Local human service programs, supported by the United Way, include daycare, after-school activities, assistance with utility bills, transportation, senior services, emergency food & clothing and youth recreational opportunities.

United Way support ensures that the 45 percent of Chatham's students who are eligible for free or

reduced-cost lunches are fed during the weekends and summer months. It ensures that the nearly 2,500 residents in need of emergency assistance this year will have a place to turn. And it ensures that the 14 percent of Chatham's residents living in poverty will have opportunities to improve their circumstances.

To fulfill its mission, United Way recognizes that one consolidated fundraising campaign is the most efficient way to raise money for its participating agencies. United Way also recognizes its responsibility to allocate funds to its participating agencies to meet the community needs of the county in a cost efficient and effective manner. Recognizing the dignity and importance of every resident of Chatham County, we envision a community that is committed to improving the quality of life for all.

But the United Way provides much more than dollars. We work to identify community issues, convenes community groups and develops special initiatives.

Through its funding application process, United Way certifies agencies and holds them accountable for outcomes. Some have called United Way's certification process the "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval for nonprofit agencies. Each agency's application package goes through a 31-point certification checklist covering Financial, Legal, Governance and Human Resources issues.

Your United Way strategically invests in effective programs, innovative approaches and collaborative solutions. We also support invaluable services necessary to strengthen the community, including 2-1-1.

What is 2-1-1?
United Way partnered



DINA REYNOLDS

with the Chatham County Health Department to bring NC 2-1-1 to Chatham residents. 2-1-1 is an information and referral service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone and online at www.nc211.org. It is a free, confidential, multilingual resource that connects Chatham residents to health and human services.

Callers receive contact information for all resources for their specific need. All of Chatham's human service agencies have entered the programs they offer into the database. Getting the info is as easy as picking up the phone and dialing 2-1-1.

Who operates the United Way?

The United Way of Chatham County is governed by a volunteer board of directors made up of Chatham residents. All policies, activities and procedures are determined right here at home. The community volunteers who work on the board of directors and the various committees come from all walks of life and reflect the diversity of our county.

What is United Way Worldwide?

United Way Worldwide is not corporate headquarters for the United Way of Chatham County. It is a national support organization designed to assist local United Ways across the world. It does not regulate local United Ways, yet does have standards all United Ways must adhere to in order to use the United Way name. United Way Worldwide provides also support services like

advertising, research on national social needs, educational instruction and strategic planning for methods that United Ways can use to improve their communities. The annual fee is less than 1 percent of campaign proceeds.

How does the annual campaign work?

The United Way holds a single community-wide campaign which saves all the agencies money, time, and effort and is exactly why the United Way was originally created. Member agencies rely on United Way as a consistent source of funds, which saves them money in processing, tracking and billing for donations. The more United Way is able to fund the programs, the less agencies will have to spend on staff, time and resources to conduct their own fundraisers. The critical advantage of United Way is that it can raise money for the organizations it funds far less expensively than they could ever hope to do themselves. In addition, each donor's gift is joined with other gifts to multiply the impact further than any one gift alone.

How much is spent on campaign costs and overhead?

Because of the large number of volunteers and in-kind donations, United Way of Chatham County's operating costs for the last fiscal year was a low 14.7 percent. As a point of reference, the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance sets the maximum recommended rate for overhead costs of nonprofit organizations at 35 percent.

Will the money I give to United Way stay in the community?

Yes. We often say United Way is local giving with local impact. The money raised in the Chatham County stays in Chatham County unless you, as the donor, request that it be sent to another United Way or a charity outside of our area.

How does United Way decide how much to distribute to each agency?

United Way invites campaign donors to review agency funding applications, conduct site visits and meet with agency representatives. The Program Review Panels analyze each agency's funding request, annual budget and programs. They distribute funds by reviewing the need of the agency, the need for the programs, the impact on those served and the effectiveness of the agency to provide the programs. Approximately 600 hours per year are spent by community volunteers who serve as stewards to ensure every donor's dollars are directed where they will have the most impact and make a difference.

How does United Way know how the funds are being used?

Agencies are invited to submit project proposals to address the most pressing needs of the county on an annual basis. All funding proposals are required to include program goals and objectives. Agencies awarded United Way funding are required to report their progress toward meeting the submitted goals on a biannual basis. This year-round oversight ensures that donor dollars are being utilized effectively and efficiently.

Do donors have the option to designate a specific agency?

Yes, if the donor wants to designate their entire or even a portion of their gift to one agency, they can do so.

What if a donor wants to contribute, yet doesn't feel strongly about designating to a specific agency?

Designations are op-

tional. If no designation is indicated, the contribution will go where the needs are the most critical. We call this the Community Care Fund. The United Way Program Review Panels will direct these contributions to agencies that have demonstrated the most needed and effective programs. This is the most common manner of giving.

Why should I invest in United Way instead of choosing a specific agency?

The United Way of Chatham County makes sure your money goes where it is needed most. We offer donors the opportunity to support the entire community and maximize their giving. By choosing to give to the Community Care Fund, United Way can direct funding to the most pressing needs in the county, based on research, to create lasting change.

What's Chatham County's Community Needs Assessment?

United Way is a member of the Chatham County Health Alliance, a collaborative group of local professionals and residents working together to improve health in Chatham County. The Alliance was established in March 2015 and it brings together both traditional and nontraditional partners to work together to find community solutions for issues affecting health in Chatham County.

United Way was among the sponsors of the Health Alliance's Community Assessment in 2018. The assessment provides a snapshot of the county and its residents- what they need, what challenges they face, what strengths and opportunities exist in the community and what we can do together to make life better. The results of the assessment are helping the Chatham Health Alliance, Chatham County Public Health Department, Chatham Hospital, United Way and multiple community organizations to identify Chatham's priority needs and create strategies to address them. Assessment results are available at www.chathamhealthalliance.org/community-assessment.

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Chatham Charter cherishing connection with CCCC

BY ZACHARY HORNER
News + Record Staff

High school students taking classes at local community colleges is nothing new or unique, even in North Carolina and the central region of the state.

But Chatham Charter School is working to take that connection to the next level.

According to data released by the school

earlier this year, 40 of the 46 members of Chatham Charter's Class of 2018 completed either the College Transfer Pathway, designed to seamlessly introduce students into college life with several credits to their name, or earned Career and Technical Education certifications through Central Carolina Community College's Career & College Promise program.

Additionally, 84 percent of the Class of 2019 is on track to complete one

"People have got to understand how outstanding of a resource that (CCCC) is in this area. We're very fortunate to be where we are with Central Carolina in this area."

JOHN ELDRIDGE, Head of School, Chatham Charter School

That variety of options, Eldridge said, is evident of CCCC's quality.

"People have got to understand how outstanding of a resource that is in this area," he said. "We

well together."

Eldridge said Chatham Charter has already seen alumni who have taken advantage of this program go on to collegiate and/or career success earlier than