

# Frequently Asked Questions



## Is my United Way a local or national organization?

Each United Way chapter is completely autonomous; locally governed, organized and operated. The United Way system includes more than 1,300 community-based United Way organizations in the United States and around the world. Each is independent, separately incorporated and governed by a local, volunteer Board of Directors. Because of the unique conditions in diverse communities, the issues United Way's address are determined locally.

## Is United Way really different from other nonprofits?

You bet. United Way of the Wine Country is unique in the way it makes an impact in the community. We no longer simply raise and distribute money to nonprofits. Today's complex problems require proactive, permanent solutions. Our history of leadership enables us to spearhead comprehensive, community-wide change. We are a catalyst, a convener, a collaborator and a change agent. Our work brings people together to determine the root causes of our community's most challenging problems and to do whatever it takes to achieve measurable and lasting results. No other organization enables a donor's gift to make such a broad impact across the community.

## Who determines how my donation is spent?

Volunteers. Individuals like you, who represent a broad spectrum of the counties, serve on the United Way Board of Directors. United Way of the Wine Country is a local autonomous organization making local decisions on how monies are raised and how monies are spent. We are not governed by a national organization, or do we follow mandated policies and procedures.

## What are United Way's priorities in Wine Country?

We're focused on the critical local issues like health, education and financial stability. We address these important issues through our Community Fund: Supporting Youth Development, Maintaining Senior Independence, Strengthening Families and Resolving Crises.

## Why should I give to United Way instead of directly to a specific agency?

We all have special interests, and we would not ask you to support United Way at the expense of another charitable organization. But there are critical issues in our community that cannot be solved by a single agency alone. United Way's coordinated planning and needs assessment programs ensure that your gift will be used wisely and effectively to meet our area's most critical needs as a whole.

## Is United Way just a fundraiser?

We do far more than just fundraising. United Way is a partner in change, working with a broad range of people and organizations to identify and resolve pressing community issues. Our fundraising efforts are one way that we bring about positive change in individual lives and community conditions because the campaign gives us the ability to fund needed services, programs and county-based initiatives. However, United Way also works to:

- Identify community needs and priorities
- Facilitate the efforts of those who can help bring about needed positive changes
- Monitor its funding partners to ensure they are using United Way dollars as effectively and efficiently as possible
- Promote volunteerism county-wide
- Advocacy efforts on behalf of our community's most critical issues

## Where does my United Way contribution go?

Your United Way contribution stays right here in Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt and Del Norte counties, unless you designate it elsewhere. United Way dollars are targeted to meet critical community needs in the county and invest in long-term solutions to solve the most critical issues, like ensuring all children have adequate health care coverage and reducing child abuse rates.

## Why should I give, I don't use the services?

Chances are, you or someone you know will use a United Way member agency service or program in your lifetime. When you consider the tremendous range of services provided by United Way funded programs, you or a family member will probably use one of the services at some point in time. Perhaps a family will need other services our agencies provide. Whatever the occasion, United Way funded programs meet the needs of thousands of people in our service area, assuring all of us a better place to live, work, and play.

## How do I know my dollars are helping the people who really need help?

You can rely on United Way's well-trained volunteers to ensure that your gift is invested to make the greatest impact. Allocation amounts are determined by local volunteers, who carefully consider priority community needs, agency budget requests, performance, and available funding capabilities. Their recommendations are then reviewed and approved by United Way's entire volunteer Board of Directors.

## How much of my contribution goes to help people?

Approximately 76 cents of every dollar donated to United Way's annual campaign goes directly to support agency services and other United Way programs that help people in need. Only about 24 cents helps support administrative and fundraising costs. National charity watchdog organizations report that 25 cents per dollar is average for operating costs, and that up to 40 cents is acceptable. United Way of the Wine Country is always striving to make the most efficient and effective use of your contributions to the annual campaign.

## Does United Way charge a processing fee if I designate to an agency?

In order to reimburse United Way for processing expenses, a 16% processing fee is charged on all contributions designated to a specific agency.