

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS AND DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

You may, on occasion, encounter someone who objects to making a United Way contribution. Keep in mind that objections present an opportunity to give more information or clarify misconceptions.

Here are some suggestions:

Objections are not personal.

- Remember, their objections are not directed at you. We understand that giving is a personal matter and people can feel very strongly about the organizations and programs they support. If they aren't ready to commit to donating, suggest they learn more about United Way and our work in the community by signing up to receive our e-newsletter or attending an event.

Objections are often based on incorrect information.

- Try to identify the real issue. United Way is committed to maintaining and modeling the highest ethical standards. We believe in providing leadership and programming that is effective, transparent, compassionate, and inclusive. If you are unsure about the issue, a good response is to acknowledge that you don't know about that particular issue, but share what you do know. Some examples of common tough questions are listed on the back page.

Validate their concerns.

- Listen carefully and show your concern with an acknowledgment of sympathy for their negative experience or thought. This does not mean you agree, but that you care about the concern. If you can't respond to their concern, offer to connect them to someone who can.

Don't encourage the objector to expand and keep talking.

- Rather than allow the person voicing the objection to expand on it, validate their concern and offer to talk more after the presentation.

Don't argue or be defensive.

- Instead of reacting defensively, respond by offering information about the many ways United Way helps people. Again, offer to discuss the issue further after the group meeting.

It's okay to say you don't know.

- You are a supporter of United Way, not an expert or staff member. It's better to acknowledge that you don't know the answer than to give wrong information. Let those with questions know you'll get back to them with the answer. Tell them they can visit our website or call us at 509-783-4102.

Relax and be yourself.

- You have ideas to present and know why you are a supporter, so be straightforward in your presentation. Asking for someone's participation or gift is not a "win/lose" situation. It's okay if someone isn't ready to jump on board.

Remember, education not pressure.

- The most responsive donors are those who have the opportunity to become informed and involved. Experience clearly shows that pressure creates animosity, hinders communication and understanding, and can lead to decreased support. Suggest ways to learn more through receiving United Way's e-newsletter, attending the annual LIVE UNITED Breakfast and/or LIVE UNITED Celebration, or volunteering at an event. Ways to start supporting without the commitment of payroll deduction or direct gift include shopping through amazonsmile.com or participating in Fred Meyer's Community Rewards Program. Both are at no extra cost to the individual and are done automatically by linking your current Amazon account or Fred Meyer Rewards card to United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties.

Common tough questions and suggested responses:

- Questions or negative comments regarding United Way's overhead rate: According to Guide Star and Charity Navigator (reputable non-profit information resource organizations), the average service-based organization has overhead costs of 35%. Many non-profits have overhead costs that far exceed that. United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties is proud to report a 15% overhead rate. One of the things that we attribute this rate to is our large base of volunteer supporters. It may be appropriate when answering this question to also discuss United Way's Cornerstone Program.
- Confusion on United Way Funded Service Providers vs. a Designated Donation: United Way Funded Service Providers are partners through Community Solutions. These agencies participate in an open application process and must have a program that serves the community and aligns with one of United Way's four main focus areas: education, health, safety, and self-sufficiency. These programs receive grant funding for a two-year cycle. Designated donations are individual donations received specifically for a qualified 501c3 non-profit organization. We are required, by law, to pass on this designation to the specified agency.
- Questions or negative comments regarding why or why not United Way funds a particular program or agency: In order for a program or agency to receive Community Solutions Investment Funding, they must apply. Direct any questions regarding the funding application process to your United Way representative.
- You may receive questions regarding the relationship between United Way and Planned Parenthood. United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties is one of over 1,200 United Way organizations in the United States. Like every other United Way, ours is autonomous and governed by a local board of directors. As described above, in order to become a United Way Community Investment Funding partner, agencies must qualify and complete the application process. Planned Parenthood has never applied for funding support from United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties. Any funds Planned Parenthood may have received have been solely through specified donor designations.
- Occasionally, we receive questions from donors about staff compensation. Our local United Way is a not-for-profit organization that must run like an efficient business in order to make sure we get the most out of every dollar entrusted to us by generous Tri-Citians. Our annual United Way campaign is nearly \$4 million. These funds are invested back into our community to help address our toughest challenges and improve lives across our region. Well-run charities, like businesses, need talented professionals, with the right education and experience, to get the best outcomes. To lead this team, our CEO must be a qualified leader to ensure efficient internal operations, trustworthy financial stewardship, and effective programs and services.

If a difficult question or situation comes up that is not on this list, please contact us, and we will be happy to either provide you with an answer or follow up for you.