

## Community Impact and Investment: An Intensive Process

Yes, here at United Way of Gaston County we talk a lot about raising money. But, there is so much more to us than that. Every year at this time, we begin the tough task of the Community Impact & Investment Process, formerly known as Fund Distribution. You can have a key role in this process and help make decisions about what impact your dollars have on our community.

Community impact is a tough process, but to me it is where the rubber meets the road. It's about what we are doing to reduce or eliminate the underlying causes of our community needs. Our investors (donors) deserve information about the effectiveness of programs they support and want evidence that United Way funded programs actually make a difference for people in our community.

The UWGC Community Impact & Investment Panel, led by Emmie Bowyer, will soon begin their labor-intensive work of reviewing applications for 2010 - 2011 funding based on our priority impact areas: **Education** - helping children and youth succeed, **Income** - improving employability and promoting financial stability and **Health** - promoting health and wellness. This group of community volunteers represents a cross-section of our community and includes professionals, homemakers, elected officials, businessmen/women and retirees. Some have served on the panel before; some will be new this year. And there is room for more; we need 50 – 75 folks.

This impressive group of people all have one thing in common, a desire to see our community be the best it can be by reviewing and insuring the United Way's dollars are being spent where they can make the most impact. The group will undergo a training process and will learn the difference in program vs. community outcomes. They will learn how United Way is driving community impact. Then they will review agency financial reports, read applications, talk to agency representatives and volunteers, pore over the information gathered again and make recommendations to the United Way Board. Not an easy task and not one to be taken lightly. This group may have to make some tough decisions – and maybe some not-so-popular decisions. But they will be committed to the process.

Volunteers are required to attend **one** of the three following training sessions: **Tuesday**, April 13th 9 – 11 am, **Wednesday**, April 14th 1 – 3 pm or **Thursday**, April 15<sup>th</sup> 3 – 5 pm. All of these sessions will take place at the United Way of Gaston County office, located at 200 E. Franklin Blvd. in Gastonia. The Program presentations and reviews will be held at Gaston College on Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 8 am – 5 pm both days. If you are interested in joining this community service, please contact Karen Bowman, Director of Finance and Administration at 704. 864.4554 ext. 11 or [kbowman@unitedwaygaston.org](mailto:kbowman@unitedwaygaston.org) **no later than Monday, March 1, 2010.**

Hats off to our Community Impact & Investment Panel volunteers this year and *every year* because they are gearing up for a very important and difficult task! We salute you!