

## United Way hopes companies like targeted approach

By Shia Kapos

Wendy DuBoe, president and CEO of United Way of Metropolitan Chicago, stood between a table of doughnuts and a station with bacon-wrapped stuffed jalapeño peppers at the Millennium Park kickoff party Friday for the organization's annual giving campaign.

She greeted guests and answered questions about United Way's new mission to focus on education, income and health issues in Chicago's neediest communities. In the past, United Way tried to help a wide swath of social services groups, often regardless of whether they focused on the area's neediest communities.

"We believe poverty is not destiny," she told the crowd of 400 guests, many of whom are corporate partners with United Way or beneficiaries of the campaign.

Ms. DuBoe said she hopes the new branding mission also attracts new donors.

United Way chapters throughout the United States have been struggling to boost campaign totals since 2008, when the umbrella charity organization was hit by the recession and a pay scandal in North Carolina that drew national attention. The increase in online giving also has chipped away at

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United Way's efforts.

The Chicago chapter has lost 5 percent of companies since 2008, or about 60 corporate participants that would encourage employees to give a percentage of their income to the charity. A handful of those companies have returned.

United Way says it doesn't ask why organizations leave, but Ms. DuBoe said she keeps in touch with each in hopes they will return. She hopes the new effort to focus on economically hard-hit communities will draw more companies back into the fold.

The Chicago chapter's campaign goal this year is \$52 million, down from the \$57 million raised in 2008 but up a bit from the \$51.1 million raised last year.

The organization hopes the “Live United 2020” campaign started two years ago helps 50,000 underperforming middle-school kids each year enter high school ready to succeed. It wants to advance economic stability for 100,000 households. And it wants to help 1 million people a year in crisis. “That means providing emergency shelter, providing food through pantries and food banks and helping people out of domestic

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violence,” said Ms. DuBoe.

Tim Maloney, Illinois president of Bank of America and this year's United Way campaign chair, said he expects the new campaign will be an easier sell to donors.

“The ability to really target resources and to connect the dots with other agencies, I think, will resonate with a number of donors,” he said.

Habitat for Humanity Chicago South Suburbs is likely to be a new recipient of United Way's campaign efforts.

“We felt the work they're doing dovetails with our own neighborhood revitalization initiative,” Melvin Thompson, development director for the organization, said at the Millennium Park event. Chicago Heights, where that Habitat office is located, is one of the communities on United Way's list of areas in critical need.

The campaign has 200 such partners in 40 neighborhoods. That's down from the 500 agency partners United Way had five years ago and down about 100 from two years ago when the campaign first began.

One of the organizations dropped from United Way's funding list is the Chinese American Service League, which for 34 years had received funding from the agency.

“We understand what they're doing, but we're hopeful” some funding might be available at some point, said Director of Development Ellyn Harris.

Philanthropy watchers say the jury's still out as to whether United Way's

new campaign will find success.

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