

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the United Way Monterey County's mission?

The United Way Monterey County's mission is to engage the community and focus resources to improve lives in Monterey County. With a focus on health and human services, United Way partners with agencies to provide many services throughout the county and across the generations.

Why should I contribute?

United Way-funded agencies provide many services for the poor, the hungry and those in need, but there are also agencies that provide other important community services. Character building programs, violence prevention programs, food delivery services for the elderly and emergency services are just a few that touch a broader range of our population. A gift to United Way ensures that your money will go where it is most needed and be directed to the most efficient, effective programs.

Why give through United Way Monterey County?

UWMC is a locally governed organization that identifies and addresses the most critical issues and needs of the people within our community. Payroll deductions provide the easiest way to contribute to high-impact local charities. What makes United Way so effective is that it helps our entire community (it is comprehensive giving), your dollars remain in the community (it is local) and it is easy! Lastly, in this era of government cutbacks, your gift helps maintain crucial programs.

How do I know that my money will be well-spent?

United Way ensures that your money will go where it is most needed and be directed to the most effective programs. United Way achieves this by giving fund distribution decisions to trained volunteers from throughout Monterey County. The volunteers carefully review grant applications, visit each agency, and review program and organizational effectiveness as well as budgets and financial statements. Once fully informed, the volunteers decide how to distribute the generous contributions of our donors. In addition, UWMC itself is audited yearly by an independent auditor. The audit and the procedural policies of UWMC are, in turn, reviewed by the Board of Directors and the Finance Committee, which includes financial experts.

What constitutes a United Way certified agency?

An agency's membership with United Way is based on specific criteria that includes guidelines for financial, program and service areas. As part of the fund distribution process, trained community volunteers visit and evaluate United Way agencies yearly.

Which United Way agencies provide services and support for North and South Monterey County?

Many United Way agencies serve both North and South County such as the YMCA, Alliance on Aging, Sun Street Centers, Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, Food Bank of Monterey County, Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels of the Salinas Valley, Reading is Fundamental, CASA, Rancho Cielo and Community Human Services.

Why doesn't United Way include all organizations?

First, United Way only funds organizations that provide health and human services. However, not all agencies want to be a part of a single, community-wide campaign. Second, United Way standards of financial accountability and program services are high. Some agencies would like to have the United Way seal of approval but may not meet the standards and scrutiny conducted by the trained community volunteers on the oversight panels. Agencies that would like to become certified may contact UWMC to learn more about the criteria, process and timing of certification.

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Can I give some of my money to a favorite charity?

Yes, but the best way to help the most people is by giving to the UWMC Community Fund. However, if you wish to give a portion of your gift to a favorite charity, you may do so. UWMC does recommend that you donate at least 50% of your gift to the Community Fund and we must ask that the designation be a minimum of \$60 per agency per year. We all have our favorite charities, but the problems of the community are much larger than any one agency can handle. United Way agencies offer a broad mix of programs and services to meet the diverse needs of our total community. The United Way campaign helps keep individual agency fund-raising costs low.

What is United Way's overhead?

A vast network of volunteers and the simplicity of payroll deduction keep the administrative expenses low. The percentage varies dependent on many things, but the biggest impact on overhead costs is the amount of money raised for the community. UWMC has a low overhead expense of 20.5%. This figure includes both administrative and fund raising costs. Although the Better Business Bureau guideline is that up to 35 % spent on overhead is acceptable, UWMC employs a far more conservative approach and continuously strives to achieve a much lower expenditure on overhead.

What makes up the overhead?

Overhead expenses are divided into the costs of resource development, which includes cultivating and soliciting donors, and administrative expenses, which includes the cost of tracking pledges and receipts and distributing the funds. At UWMC approximately 12% of overhead goes to resource development. Also included in overhead are the costs related to allocation, including support for the volunteers who review member agencies and evaluate their fiscal responsibility and viability.

Would it be cheaper for the agencies to raise their own money?

No, for most agencies United Way is a crucial part of their fundraising. UWMC has long-standing relationships with area businesses and has access to payroll deductions. UWMC can raise more money because it partners with volunteers from local businesses and recipients of services to request donations personally in the workplace. Most people are able to contribute more if they can spread their donation over the course of the year through payroll deductions rather than write a check for a one-time gift. In addition, UWMC presentations educate the community to the pressing needs, and payroll deductions offer an easy way to give.

Is United Way able to collect all the money that people pledge?

Because people move out of the county, change jobs or businesses close, some people are not able to give the full amount pledged. Each year UWMC reconciles our books, calculates the amount that the pledges fell short and reports that as part of our annual audit. On an average over the last few years, 6% of the pledged amount was not realized.

Can I exclude certain agencies from my donation?

Yes, you can note an exclusion on your pledge form and UWMC will honor your request.