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**MERRILL AREA UNITED WAY, INC.**

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Merrill Area United Way

Dee Olsen, Executive Director

By chance, did you get out of bed today and say, “I wonder how I can make a positive difference in the life of one person today?” I am a little guilty, because I don’t think about this on a regular basis, but sometimes I think about it. Maybe because of my work with agencies and seeing people who have a higher degree of needs, it has a stronger presence with me. But perhaps my attention is heightened because of the onset of Thanksgiving and Christmas, and challenging times influenced by weather changes and additional monetary constraints.

Doesn’t it bring cause to pause – cause to think about doing something for someone else that would make things just a little bit better, even if it is a small thing.

During this season there are many lessons to learn about giving from the heart. In that spirit, we should all be reminded the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the New Year, are a wonderful time of year for not only enjoying all the blessings and gifts we have in our lives, but also a time to reflect on those that are less fortunate and extend a helping hand.  United Way works closely with our twenty funded programs/agencies and each agency demonstrates the depth of need we have here in the Merrill area.  Most of us cannot imagine going through the stress of the holidays without any money to buy the children a Christmas present, or to have a turkey dinner for Thanksgiving, or for that matter, not being able to pay the rent or know if you’ll be able to keep a roof over your head. It happens right here in the Merrill area though. That is why the agencies carry out the important work they do each day.

Merrill is so fortunate to have caring people and a great network of support. Many small communities don’t have such networks. Nor do they have (or find) the capacity to reach out and develop programs like Merrill has to offer.

United Way encourages you and your family to “LIVE UNITED” and get involved in a way that will bring heartfelt meaning and self-satisfaction to you and your family. Instill the importance of helping others in your own children. Do something for someone else that would make things just a little bit better. Local initiatives can help families through this season with food, clothing, housing and gifts for children and elderly.

Consider supporting the Merrill food pantry, or a church food pantry for holiday meals. Or give to the Christmas Spirit Appeal (gifts for children and families who may not otherwise have a Christmas), give gifts for residents at Pine Crest Nursing Home and other nursing facilities. Consider volunteering to help with local projects or Salvation Army Bell Ringing, or just going caroling to lighten hearts. Several churches know families that need assistance, or help with the breaking bread community meal, the tree of hope, or the mitten tree. Involvement with Food for Kids (providing food for weekends), the MAC Home, are other options.  Watch and listen to the local media for additional opportunities. Get involved and volunteer or give from the heart this Holiday Season, but also all year-round.

As a reminder United Way is concluding its fall campaign, but donations can be given all year. If interested send your check to Merrill Area United Way today to P.O. Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. All dollars stay local and support our twenty funded agencies and programs. For more information about the MAUW visit our website at merrillareaunitedway.org or email [delores.olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org](mailto:delores.olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org). Our part-time office number is 715-536-2016.