

**Mondays in Grundy
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United Way of Grundy County: Living United

It sounds like the set up to an old joke: in 1887, a Denver priest, two ministers and a rabbi got together and founded the United Way. They recognized the need for cooperative action to address their city's welfare problems. From its ecumenical, practical beginning, the United Way has used the power of a community's leverage to have the maximum impact on local residents.

In Grundy County, our United Way started in 1946 as a Community Chest and became the United Fund before officially becoming a United Way organization. The brilliance of the United Way structure is this: as a local United Way, we have access to a national system of resources—marketing, fundraising ideas, continuing education, shared practices, technical support—and all of that “intelligence” gets put to work right back in the community where we live. For every dollar we raise, the United Way of Grundy County allocates 92 cents to one of its 27 partner agencies.

If there is a punch line to our joke about the priest, two ministers, and rabbi, it is this: the United Way system actually works in a powerful, practical, life-affecting way. Some strengths of the United Way philosophy:

1. Smaller agencies that receive United Way grants do not have to spend the time or money by hiring individual fundraisers; often the United Way allocation provides a substantial portion of their needed funds.
2. The United Way creates leverage; if everyone gives a little, no one has to give a lot. If an individual wants to make the greatest impact through a donation to their community, a United Way donation spreads the farthest, touches the most lives, and is allocated in a fiscally and socially responsible manner.
3. Neighbors help neighbors. The United Way of Grundy County has a 15 member volunteer board that reviews rigorous grant applications from area agencies. Agencies must provide data on program outcomes specific to Grundy County residents. Funds are then allocated to agencies; those allocated funds give the agency a firm foundation for their coming fiscal year.

This October I've had the pleasure of working with Terry Glaser, Darrell Dolmage, and Tom Nunheimer at LyondellBasell, one of several United Way of Grundy County corporate partners. These committed employees take on an extra responsibility to spearhead their corporate United Way campaign. They held several special events at their

plant for their employees to highlight the United Way (including root beer floats scooped up by Grundy County American Red Cross volunteers). They inspire their peers to “give where they live.” Their lives are tough— business is hard and everyone is challenged by the economy—but they have demonstrated in a very tangible way how to “live united.” That Denver priest, two ministers, and rabbi would be proud.