



**United Way of Colquitt County
Three-Year Strategic Plan/Planning Retreat**

Southern Regional Technical College
Conference Center
July 21, 2021
9am-2pm

RETREAT RESULTS

Present: Angela Castellow, Becky Giddens, Barbara Grogan, Caroline Horne, Sheriff Rod Howell, Anna Ligon, Danielle Mobley, Tyler Mobley, Wesley Rogers, Bob Swadel, Anne Swartzentruber, Tommie Beth Willis, Mo Yearta, Lisa Zeanah

Facilitator: Mary Beth Brownlee, ACCG

Welcome & Kick-Off

Caroline kicked off the retreat by welcoming participants—current and past Board members, the former Executive Director and committed volunteers. She introduced Mary Beth Brownlee (ACCG) as the facilitator, who asked the group to introduce themselves and tell a little about their involvement with United Way of Colquitt County (UWCC).

How Well Do You Know Your United Way?

Mary Beth then asked participants to tell the story of United Way from their own perspectives. Who do we support? How do we make those decisions? What are our funding priorities?

Highlights from their insight are shared below:

- Service to the community, make an impact (ex. Food Box)
- I gain a better understanding of other nonprofit organizations in the community and the work that they do, what the needs are, etc.
- I get to contribute without being in the spotlight
- To support Caroline!
- Assist in making sure efforts are not duplicated in the community—provide support where it's needed
- United Way serves to help/enrich others
- Our work helps foster a thriving community
- The money given in Colquitt County STAYS in Colquitt County
- I believe the work of United Way of Colquitt County enhances quality of LIVES—where you are in your personal, individual circumstances
- Reach to changing needs in the community—needs are constantly changing, evolving
- Wide net of impact, ability to help
- Best opportunity to make an impact
- Fund our priorities—education, health, personal finance

- United Way as the “Mother of Social Work”
- Investment is truly local
- Development and discovery of needs
- Awareness of issues and education—opportunity to educate others
- Alignment of stewardship opportunities
 - Serve others on my team in a personal way
 - Opportunity for growth
- Responsibility of others
- Coordination of efforts, checks and balances
- Meet basic human needs—what is their version of success? Help them achieve it!
- Simplicity of efforts
- Productive and contributing members of community
- Help people give back to their own families
- Impact to others—ripple effect to serve others
- Grateful
- Work with other caring leaders
- Donate once to an organization that has vetted others—it’s a safe and valid investment; good/proven ROI
- Shape way needs are met
- Hold other non-profit organizations accountable
- We build the non-profit sector
 - Leadership
 - Capacity
 - Financially
 - Resourcefulness
- Strengthen other non-profits to achieve their own missions
- Provide leadership to other non-profits
 - Need for basic, peer-to-peer mentoring
- United Way offers a “listening ear” on behalf of non-profits
 - Avoid/minimize duplication of efforts
- Big hearts!
- Great connector of volunteers
- Nucleus of the non-profit community in Colquitt County
- Catalyst for reaching the unserved
- It’s a domino effect—all ships rise

Let’s Have a Conversation...

Mary Beth led participants in a discussion to better understand the pressing issues facing the United Way, the community in general, and UWCC’s operations within that context.

She began by asking participants to describe “How United Way is viewed or seen in the community.” Specifically, she referenced that United Way has been described as the “Chamber of the Non-Profit Sector;” is this considered positive or negative? Is this accurate? Is this the perception that the Board wants for United Way? The results of that discussion are below:

- Among those who know us, our work, our organization is well-respected

- Others, who don't work with us, don't know at all
- This is positive!
- There are some in the community who will not/do not believe the money is truly invested (and stays) locally
- Misunderstanding that United Way funds abortion—confusion around “supports Planned Parenthood”
 - Among some influential community members who have potential funding to commit significant financial support
 - Address concerns through one-on-one connections, relationships
- Lack of understanding of United Way structure—local v. corporate relationships and how/where they differ
- Limited belief in the autonomy of the local United Way
- Negative perceptions related to national united way
- We must be smart, strategic as a board regarding our communications and messaging
 - Define yourself by who you are, and who you are NOT
- We are not a “Super Board;” we don't tell others how to operate
- Reality is that the impact of PCOM is changing lifestyle and culture of local residents/community
- United Way as a “211” for area non-profit organizations
- Resource issues and capacity
- Central point of contact for fundraising and related events
 - Relationship to Chamber
- Who's the campaign watch guard? Or “guard dog”?
- Tie to efforts of Archway Partnership—is this is duplication of efforts?
- Opportunity to conduct a feasibility study for capital campaign
- Resource/Non-Profit Development Center
- Donor management and relations managed largely on individual basis and with celebration event
- Donors receive a letter of appreciation/recognition, invitation to the breakfast, and a copy of the annual report—Could there/should there be more?
- “People give to people”—i.e., their peers
- Board representatives help facilitate employee contributions
- Limited opportunity for new donor development
- Need to identify a new generation of donors!
- Retired, special contacts
- What is the actual capacity of what we can take on?
 - What's realistic? In terms of staff, Board, funding?

How do the Habitat Houses work? Is there a long-term goal?

- What about Habitat?
- What is the accountability of other non-profit organizations? Are there other partnerships that can help/assist?
- What about the liability issues related to holding the houses? Are all Board members aware of this scenario?
- United Way currently holds/owns 7 Habitat houses that it manages a rent management payment schedule, etc.
 - Property management

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- How does this impact financial reserves for United Way's growth?
- Staff time/resources going into property management—is this the best use of Caroline's time? How is it impacting other priorities?
- Are there partnership opportunities available that may make this a more viable scenario?
- Education needed re properties
- The WHY of rental/property management
 - Are we getting at the root causes of why these individuals/families are in these scenarios to begin with?
 - We need to meet OUR mission! (Education, Financial Literacy)
- What do we do with extra money/resources?

Additional discussion around the organization's operations continued, focused on the following questions:

- *How do we assess community needs? Priorities?*
- *How Do We Operationalize DE&I?*
- *How Do We Fund/Prioritize Our Work? Allocation Process—Is It Effective? Is there a Better Way?*
- *Does Our Budget Reflect Our Priorities? Growth Needs? Do We Know?*

General discussion followed that lead to the development of the three-year strategic plan (attached). As issues came up with emphasis or importance, Mary Beth captured those critical priorities on a separate flip chart throughout the day. Those "ah-ha" moments are reflected in the bulleted list below.

Potential Issues—Priorities for Consideration/Action

- How to decline an organization or partner organization?
 - Is there a mechanism? Review process that allows for such
 - Revisit the application process
 - Consider local accountability measures
- Donor relations and messaging
- Changing local culture—Religion, Personal Rights, DE&I, culture
- Critical needs/same donors across agencies—results in a multi-million-dollar conflict
- Review Agency Agreements!
- Develop a plan of action for Habitat houses
- Conduct a Community Needs Assessment
 - Potential for Archway Partnership project
- Calendar of events/fundraising, coordination of efforts
 - Tied to allocation/application process
 - Potential for Archway Partnership project

Focus on Operations

The facilitator then asked the participants to split into groups of three based on their area of greatest interest—Board Dynamics, Relationship with Partner Agencies/Allocation, and Growth & Sustainability of UWCC. Each group was presented with a series of questions to address or areas of discussion that needed to be prioritized/clarified for further processing.

The group reflections are provided within the following narrative, as it additional input provided by Board members during the report out.

Group 1 – Board Functionality/Dynamics—What Works? What Doesn't? What Could We Do Differently?

Group 1 was tasked to consider and provide recommendations for the following questions/discussion items:

- *What about our Board?*
 - *Disconnect with Board—Contributions/Financial Investment v. Activity/Implementation*
- *What About Committee Structure? Is It Effective? Could some be ad hoc?*
 - *Executive Committee*
 - *Board Development Committee*
 - *Events Committee*
 - *Resource & Interagency Development Committee*
 - *Finance & Audit Committee*
 - *Marketing Committee*
 - *Special Grant Committee*
 - *Allocation Committee*
 - *Campaign Cabinet*
- *Role, Purpose and Training of Board Members, Committee Members, etc.*

The results of their deliberation and recommendations are below:

Board Development

- Orientation and training session needed for new board members as part of their onboarding process
- Target recruitment of board members based on skills, assets they bring to the organization
- Establish a database of potential board members based on current volunteers—utilize Board members networks, spheres of influence
- Create a “first year check list” for new members to manage expectations
- Include information for new board members that speaks to why they were selected to be board members, what is the purpose/role of United Way, what are board member expectations, etc.
- Seek diversity of board members whenever possible to reflect United Way priorities
- Consider amending bylaws to reflect priorities, where/as needed
- Recruit new board members to be WORKING board members
 - Restructure board accordingly
 - Provide relief/support to Executive Director

Committee Structure

- Chairs?
- Reporting?
- #/Structure?
- Plug-in/election/appointment to committee(s), as well as identification of chair(s)
- Establish co-chair structure to enhance accountability
- Formalize/define committee structure—restructure based on Board/organization needs
 - Consider capacity—current and desired

Training Needs

- Identify opportunities for leadership training and executive training—for Caroline and the Board

- Consider localized training, as well as ELPNO opportunities and others offered by J.W. Fanning Institute
 - Direct outreach to Fanning, and/or
 - Coordinate through Archway Partnership

Group 2 – Relationships with Partner Agencies/Allocation

Group 2 was tasked to consider and provide recommendations for the following discussion items:

- *Cross-function of Board Members/Purpose of Service*
- *Reporting Requirements/Connectivity*
- *Role of Executive Director*
- *Allocation Process/Effectiveness*

The results of their deliberation are detailed below:

Cross Function of Board Members/Purpose

- Recognize new board members at the annual meeting
- Train/remind members to always keep United Way in mind! (Bob S.)
- Example – If CCEF is going to fund mentors, share with all/both boards about what mentoring programs/efforts are occurring
- Create time on the agenda during each month’s board meeting for an update/educational “moment;” examples to include:
 - Habitat houses
 - Community campaigns
 - Rental assistance programs
 - Other “big picture” items that would benefit board members from knowing about, making connections, etc.

Agency Agreements/Expectations

- Item 5 – KEEP
 - August-September blackout for campaigns
- Item 6 – REWORD
 - Regarding capital funds...
 - Annually host grant opportunities
 - “Inform” United Way of capital campaigns—change to “required to notify” for the benefit of helping our nonprofits
 - Also, include on comprehensive non-profit calendar
- Requirement to acknowledge United Way support/funding
 - Standardize required impact statements
 - Establish timeline for picture acknowledging United Way investment (Ex., 30 days from receipt, etc.)
- Establish Training Week for local/area non-profits
 - ELPNO (J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development)
 - Individual, executive-level coaching
 - Non-profit series
 - Technical training
 - Locals/Board members/volunteers can train agencies on finances, forms, etc.

Executive Director

1. Agency partner, liaison , network connector
2. Resource provider – technical resources, assistance
 - May have to find/locate in order to provide
3. NOT a “police”/oversight of other agencies
 - Executive Director should not have to remind partner agencies excessively to complete/turn in forms, etc.

Allocation Process/Effectiveness

- Streamline the process
- Combine Phase I visit and meeting – do together
- Establish clear expectations of the visits; make sure agencies are prepared, know what to expect, provide a checklist/list of requirements, etc.
- Eliminate second meeting
- Offer a “Pre-requisite” meeting as a requirement before allocation process begins
- Establish agency/partner updates each month at board meetings
- Increase efficiency of process!
- Establish committee/board liaisons to mentor each year (could be young professionals? Way to build board pipeline, engagement)
- Track progress over time

Group 3 – Growth & Sustainability—What About Staff? Operations? Space?

Group 3 was tasked with considering and providing recommendations for the following:

- *Operations/Space*
- *Staff*
- *Board Succession*
- *Incubator*
- *Annual Campaign*
- *Others/TBD*

The results of their deliberation are captured below:

The group began by framing their focus around the question, “What can we do now to work towards a successful \$1 Million campaign?” Within that context, they priorities the items below in terms of importance and urgency.

Space

- Now – inadequate; impact of visual environment/perception
- Need – new environment
- Goal – dedicated space for United Way
- IMMEDIATE ACTION + Long-Term – Visual environment impact
- Temporary space currently available at the City’s Welcome Center

Operations

- Now – inadequate; workspace, meeting space, office space, technology, etc.
- Habitat for Humanity – Board decision; should not be part of United Way operations/management

Staff

- Now – Inadequate
- Need – Two, full-time staff; plus, additional help by intern
- Currently, do not offer benefits. What about other non-profit organizations? Could enough work together to find adequate policy to cover benefit needs? i.e., Georgia Chamber insurance offered to staff of multiple organizations under the umbrella of the Chamber—or, some similar arrangement to be considered/negotiated with City, County, others/TBD. Could consider the creation of an umbrella agency solely for the purpose of providing insurance to NPO executives, where/as needed.

Board Succession

- Need – New Board members, younger generation(s)
- Need for Board training and new member orientation to provide consistency and improve board effectiveness

Incubator

- Nice, but the items above need to be addressed first—namely, concerns re space/operations and staff.
- Second or third tier priority

Campaign

- Must increase staff and space to increase the campaign operations to raise \$1 Million; all the above items are necessary to get in line so that United Way appears to be and operates as an organization capable of both raising and managing a fund of \$1 Million. Must “look the part.”

Charting Our Course, 2021-2024

The facilitator then asked the group to collectively think about the “Big Ideas” that United Way can accomplish. “What are the amazing things we can do over the next three years?” Specifically, she tasked participants to think about what they hope to achieve as an organization around their priority areas over the term of the next three-year strategic plan—Health, Education, Income/Financial Stability, and DE&I.

The highlights from their discussion are reflected in the following narrative.

Health

- Access and costs prohibit care that people in Colquitt County need
- Limited access to doctors, psychiatrist, etc.
- Can United Way assist? Perhaps with transportation needs, etc.?
- We struggle with getting mental health organizations to apply for United Way assistance
- Target Amount - \$10,000 over 3 years!
- Mental health issues are related to workforce development and workforce needs
- Address the “stigma” of mental health

- Establish resource/toolkit; “Doctors on Demand” app (\$4)
- Issues of health, wellness and mental health are a priority
- Chamber Blast to have Mental Health Mondays
- Mental health awareness event—breakfast (Chick-fil-A)
 - HR, insurance professionals, etc.
- Bring experts together—host a panel for employers, agencies
 - Identify solutions; develop action plan to address issues/challenges

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- We have a diverse board
- DE&I statement review – Change statement to “empower”...use offensive, not defensive language
 - See statement from Columbus United Way, PCOM
- Continue to invest in Leadership Legends; make that relationship/connection more visible and known
- What about the Hispanic community?
 - Identify funding source(s) to restart ABC grant
- Reevaluate questions during the Allocation process to measure DE&I impact more effectively
- Host a DE&I workshop for non-profits
 - How are we doing this as a community? As individual NPOs?
 - 1-2 times/year

Education

- Need for a focus on adult education—financial planning, financial literacy
- Migrant education, focus on migrant camps
 - Adult literacy, English as a Second Language
 - Paying teacher to provide serves, education at the camps during off hours
 - Juan Martinez
- Financial literacy
- Food bank, clothing bank
- Re-envision/Repurpose the Community Impact Grant process/language and opportunities to provide Special Grants
 - Establish/Task Bylaws Review Committee (Anne, BG) to revisit/review
 - Local funding/501 (c) 3 status

Financial Stability/Income

- Continue support of YES!
- Bring back the poverty workshops!
 - 3-days
 - Ruby Payne
- Explore connectivity of financial literacy programs and education
 - FACS (Danielle, BG Lisa)
 - High School (class v. club)
 - Chamber (C.E. Gray)
 - Leadership of Tomorrow (Grades 8-12)
 - United Way to purchase curriculum

Wrap-Up & Adjourn

At the completion of the retreat, Mary Beth thanked the United Way Board members for their time and thoughtful deliberation over the day's content. She committed to compiling the notes as captured above and presenting a draft three-year strategic plan back to Caroline for further discussion and adoption by the Board.

The retreat adjourned.