

Come See for Yourself: United Way Invites You to a Learning Expo

United Way
of Laramie County



By: Becky Breining

Several years ago I went to work for Electronic Data Systems (EDS), the company founded by Ross Perot. Shortly before I got there, a well-known consulting firm had just completed an audit of operations to improve the company's performance. As a result of this high-priced study, EDS had posted bronze plaques in high-traffic areas inscribed with three guiding principles, which employees were encouraged to adopt. Number one on the list was this: "Help one another."

'Uh-oh,' I said to myself. 'This company is in real trouble if people need to be reminded of that!'

Cities, towns and communities like Cheyenne can learn a lot from this scenario. It should go without saying that helping each other is a necessity for any successful entity. Those that adhere to it prosper; those who fail to suffer.

Sadly, the "help each other" admonition came too late for Perot's company. EDS continued to falter and was gobbled up by Hewlett-Packard. It no longer exists. Chalk it up to a hard lesson learned for corporate America.

Still, people everywhere can learn from the EDS experience. In Laramie County, United Way helps approximately one out of every three people. On Tuesday, September 17 at the Holiday Inn, you will have the opportunity to see up-close and in-person how this assistance benefits our fellow citizens. The "LIVE UNITED Expo" at the Holiday Inn from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. will give people the chance to meet one-on-one with representatives from the agencies that feed, house, clothe, educate, protect, and improve the quality of life for hundreds of families and thousands of individuals who live here.

This is a first-time event. More than 25 agencies will be on hand, and they want to meet **you**.

If you already contribute, you will be able to better understand how your contribution translates to tangible aid. If you are not, this is your opportunity to research and learn, not

only about how funds are used but how to become a volunteer. There are many ways you can contribute your time and talents. The rewards are innumerable and deeply satisfying.

To qualify as a United Way program partner, organizations must demonstrate their ability to meet high performance standards in their delivery of services. In other words, United Way holds them accountable for doing exactly what they say they will do. They are nonprofits that operate on a strong foundation and sound business principles. You'll be amazed how they have helped turn lives around.

Increasingly, people are feeling the stress of tough economic times. A recent poll showed that millions of Americans believe we are still in a recession, even though it technically ended in 2009. Joblessness remains high, applications for food stamps have skyrocketed, grocery and gas prices are up, and affordable housing remains scarce. The middle class is getting squeezed from every direction. As one talk show host put it, "After paying bills, there's not a whole lot left over." Often I wonder how families with school-age children can make ends meet.

Many of us were raised to believe that for those who have much, much is expected. The rewards associated with selfless giving are countless but cannot be deposited into a bank account or parked in a garage. Educator, author, orator, and presidential advisor Booker T. Washington put it this way: "Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others."

Please take a few minutes out of your day on September 17 to see how your community prospers when we help one another.